

AND

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Yokota Panthers running back Roy Roach

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New test uniform, left, with rejected uniform

1

平成22年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 (日刊創刊) 2月23日及び2月26日休刊
創刊誌 日本郵政関係 第106-0022 東京郵便区本木7-13-23番17号

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ELECTION 2004

- Overseas military rate appears lower
- Scattered problems noted across nation



Kerry



Bust

- Final pre-vote polls show dead heat
- Eyes of the world focused on election

Full coverage, Pages 3-7



A line of voters stretches out the door of Old Town Hall in East Haddam, Conn., on Tuesday. Officials at the polling place said that the voter turnout was "unbelievable."

AF

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

World

Afghanistan kidnapping: Afghan officials are optimistic that three U.N. hostages in the capital will be freed unharmed, a government spokesman said Tuesday, though there was no evidence of any contact with the kidnappers.

The Taliban splinter group that has claimed responsibility for abducting the trio in the Afghan capital last Thursday repeated its threat to kill them — but said it might ease its demand for the United Nations and British troops to leave Afghanistan.

Sept. 11 trial: A Jordanian-born man who says he served briefly as Osama bin Laden's bodyguard told a German court Tuesday that the al-Qaida leader spoke months before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks of a strike against the United States and said there would be "thousands of dead."

Shadi Abdellah, 28, was testifying at the retrial of Moumr el Motassadeq, a Moroccan accused of helping the Sept. 11 hijackers when they lived and studied in Hamburg.

Sudan crisis: Sudan denied a U.N. claim that Sudanese military and police forces were surrounding several refugee camps Tuesday in the war-torn region of Darfur and refusing access to humanitarian groups, but said angry Arab tribesmen had gathered in those areas.

Christiane Berthiaume, spokeswoman for the World Food Program, said in Geneva that at least 160,000 refugees in western Darfur cannot be reached by road "because of insecurity."

North Korea abductions: Japan and North Korea will hold talks in Pyongyang next week to discuss a dispute over Japanese nationals abducted by the communist nation's spies, officials said Tuesday.

The countries have failed to make progress on the issue in two past rounds of talks held in Beijing. For the third round, scheduled for Nov. 9-12, the talks will be held in the North for the first time.

"Of course we hope there will be progress," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hironaka Hosoda said at a news conference. "We expect the talks will be based on more detailed and precise information."

Nuclear crises: Challenged by the U.N. nuclear chief to prove their atomic programs are peaceful, North Korea said it would scrap its "nuclear deterrence" if the



U.S.-Taiwan arms deal: Pro-weapons activists demonstrate outside the legislature Tuesday in Taipei, Taiwan, to support the Taiwan government's plan to purchase massive amounts of U.S. weapons. Taiwan's government is eager to buy the weapons, worth \$18 billion. But the legislature hasn't approved a special budget for the deal, and a growing number of scholars, activists and retired generals are lobbying against it. Washington has warned that Taiwan's failure to approve a massive U.S. arms deal would have "repercussions" in America. The sign on the mock tank reads "Only when you have power can you have peace."

United States ended its hostile policy and Iran said negotiations with three European countries may "bring fruit."

But Taiwan's deputy U.N. ambassador Kim Chang Guk on Monday totally rejected the International Atomic Energy Agency, calling it "a political tool of the superpower."

Rioting in China: Villages were cordoned off and thousands of police kept watch along roads in central China on Tuesday following riots between majority Han Chinese and a Muslim minority that killed seven people and injured 42.

People in the area have been told they could leave only for emergencies, said the head of a mosque in the village of Nanren near the fighting's epicenter in Henan province.

States

Casino strike: Thousands of striking casino-hotel workers have reached a tentative contract agreement that signals an end to a bitter, month-old walkout — the longest in Atlantic City, N.J., casino history.

The union representing about 10,000 strike-

ing bartenders, cocktail servers, housekeepers and other service employees approved the five-year deal late Monday.

Freeway shootings: Two teenagers arrested Monday were accused in a shooting on an eastern Missouri interstate, one of a series that had sparked fears of a possible sniper aiming at motorists.

Police said the two were firing a .22-caliber rifle at a sign across Interstate 44.

One person was wounded in the shootings — a truck driver whose head injury on Oct. 21 was not life-threatening. Jeffrey Hubbard, 19, was charged Monday with second-degree assault in the case of the injured trucker.

Moussaoui terror case: Lawyers for terrorism defendant Zacarias Moussaoui said Monday they plan to seek further delays in bringing the case to trial while they appeal pretrial issues to the Supreme Court.

The lawyers, in a written motion, said they'll ask the trial judge to postpone all proceedings until they've exhausted appeals for Moussaoui — the only U.S. defendant charged with a terrorism conspiracy that included the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

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IN THE STATES

Election Day: Time for the voters to speak

Record turnout expected in first wartime election in a generation

BY CALVIN WOODWARD
AND SCOTT LINDLAU

The Associated Press

In an election that bid to rival the photo finish of 2000, voters chose on Tuesday between President Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry after a slugfest campaign that intensified through the year. Bush, voting in Texas, said, "I've given it my all." Kerry, still campaigning in Wisconsin, promised to take the nation "to a better place."

There were long lines at polling places, and officials predicted record turnout in the first wartime election in a generation.

"This election is in the hands of the people, and I feel very comfortable about that," Bush said after voting near his ranch in Crawford, Texas, along with first lady Laura Bush and twin daughters Barbara and Jenna.

Kerry, who was to vote later in Barton, handed out information packets in the morning to volunteers in La Crosse, Wis., exhorting his supporters to "get the job done."

"We're going to take America to a better place," Massachusetts senator promised.

It was the first presidential election since the United States plunged into its epochal war on terrorism, and heavy crowds were reported at polling places in the East, the first precincts to open. Long lines snaked out the doors as voters waited, some in the rain, and brought chairs for expected long waits.

The prospect of unprecedented legal challenges hung over Election Day, each side sending thousands of lawyers into motion to monitor the flood of newly registered voters and mount hair-trigger challenges against any sign of irregularity.

"My hope of course is that this election ends tonight," Bush told reporters, referring to the expected legal challenges in some districts. He won the presidency in 2000 only after a Supreme Court decision gave him Florida and the Electoral College majority.

Of Kerry, Bush said, "I wish him all the best. He and I are in the exact same position — I'm sure he's happy, like I am, that the campaign is over."

Note to readers

Read Thursday's edition of Stars and Stripes for complete state-by-state coverage of the U.S. election.



People wait in line to vote in Columbus, Ohio, early Tuesday morning. Long waits were expected throughout the United States as large numbers of Americans headed to the polls.

For his part, Kerry made Election Day appearances in Wisconsin, where residents can register and vote on the same day. Of the reports of long voter lines, he said, "It's just a magical kind of day."

A dizzying final dash across the Midwest and points south capped a campaign that found the contenders deadlocked at every vital turn.

By all signs, voters were engaged.

Long lines were reported at precincts from Florida and North Carolina to West Virginia and Michigan. "We even had people waiting in line before we opened at 6:30 a.m.," said Wayne County Clerk Robert Paskley in Wayne, W.Va. "In some places, there was more than a dozen people waiting, and that's heavy."

Rain was falling in parts of the Midwest as voters lined up.

Brian Fravel, a 43-year-old welder who lives in Columbus, Ohio, said he had never before had to wait to vote. When he arrived at the Northland Church of Christ at 7:30 a.m., he found a long line of people and waited 45 minutes to cast a ballot. "I thought I was early enough to beat it," Fravel said.

The final pre-election polls turned up tied — 49-49 in one CNN-USA Today-Gallup survey, with Ralph Nader at 1 percent. Tight surveys in Florida and a variety of Midwestern states including Ohio deepened the mystery over who would collect the necessary 270 electoral votes.

Both candidates cast their candidacies as vital to the country's welfare. Bush declared the "safety and prosperity of America" was at stake, and Kerry said that "the hopes of our country are on the line."

Overnight, the Bush campaign



Jennifer Bidlo hangs on to her 2-year-old daughter, Olivia, while casting her ballot at the 20th Precinct in West Bloomfield, Mich.

Machines breaking down, late openings among early troubles

BY ANICK JESDANUN

The Associated Press

Polling places experienced scattered problems Tuesday as legions of lawyers, election-rights activists and computer scientists watched, particularly in battleground states, for any trouble that could disenfranchise voters.

New rules, new voters and a tight presidential contest combined to create "a recipe for problems," said Sean Greene, who was watching Cleveland polls for the Election Reform Information Project, a nonpartisan research group on election reform.

Nearly one in three voters, including about half of those in Florida, were expected to cast ballots using ATM-style voting machines that computer scientists have criticized for their potential for software glitches, hacking and malfunctioning.

Other major concerns were over provisional ballots, new this presidential election and a potential source of delayed counts, and whether poll workers were adequate and sufficiently trained.

"To a certain extent, provisional ballots are second-class votes," said Spencer Overton, a law professor at George Washington University. "You can cast a provisional ballot but we don't know if officials will count it."

Long lines greeted voters in many big cities in closely contested states, and some polls opened late.

sent an e-mail from the president exhorting people to vote — "It comes down today" — and asking that the recipient forward the e-mail to five more people. Kerry e-mailed a similar call to arms: "When you go to the polls bring your friends, your family, your neighbors. No one can afford to stand on the sidelines or sit this one out."

"In all honesty, I don't think it's possible to predict what's going to

happen," Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards said Tuesday on NBC's "Today" show. "I think we're going to see unprecedented turnout, I think we're going to see huge voter participation. And when that happens, democracy works. So we feel very confident, very optimistic."

The nation's first votes cast and counted on Election Day, in the mountain hamlet of Hart's Loca-

At one New Orleans precinct, all three voting machines were broken and voters were told to come back later, said Bill Quigley, an attorney working for the NAACP.

In South Carolina, problems were reported in a handful of precincts in two counties using electronic machines. Officials said voters were forced to switch to paper ballots while technicians got the iVotronic touch screens from Electronic Systems & Software up and running within about 90 minutes.

Voters in one Richmond, Va., precinct using an old-style machine briefly cast ballots in the wrong congressional race.

And in Volusia County, Fla., a memory card in an optical-scan voting machine failed Monday at an early voting site and didn't count 13,000 ballots. Officials planned to feed the ballots, in which voters fill in a bubble, and count them Tuesday.

Chellie Pingree, president of the citizens lobbying group Common Cause, said her group was running a toll-free voting complaint and information hotline that logged 20,000 calls by 10 a.m. EST.

"Many of the states where the election is closest and contested is where we're hearing from people most," she said.

Pingree said high turnout meant "more confusion to already overburdened, understaffed polling places, many of which will have as many lawyers and poll challengers as they have people voting."

tion, N.H., reflected in miniature what seemed likely to be writ large across the country: a horse race in votes, not just polls.

Following a quirky tradition of post-midnight voting in New Hampshire's North County, 16 people voted for Bush, 14 for Kerry and one for Ralph Nader. Bush beat Democrat Al Gore 17-13 in the hamlet in 2000.

Nedra Pickler of The Associated Press, traveling with the Kerry campaign, contributed to this report; Calvin Woodward wrote from Washington.

Polling sites swamped by crowds

Undeterred by long lines and bad weather, voters cast '04 ballots

BY ROGER PETTERSON

The Associated Press

Voters trying to beat the Election Day rush turned out early in such large numbers in many precincts that they created their own crowds, standing in long lines that snaked outside and down the street, sometimes before the polling places even opened.

Umbrellas and raincoats were needed Tuesday from Texas to the lower Great Lakes, and snow-covered roads were a problem in the Texas Panhandle.

Besides the presidency, voters were filling 34 Senate seats, 11 governorships and all 435 House seats.

Both parties had pushed to increase turnout among their supporters, and even with early voting in many states, tens of millions were headed to the polls before the long Election Day wound to a close.

"Some polling places voted 25 percent of their entire registered voters in the first hour," said Tom Leach, spokesman for the Chicago Election Board. "That's just unheard of."

"We're seeing lines, people waiting in lines, lines before the polls opening," said Scott Burnham, a spokesman for the Cook County Clerk's office.

Polling places across North Dakota reported voters waiting in line when they opened.

"We've been very busy," deputy Ward County auditor Denise Osterberg said at mid-morning.

In Fargo, Shirley Blake said about 50 people were waiting when she opened a polling place, more than she had ever seen that early in more than a decade of working on elections.

"I've never had to wait in line before," Fred Flueger, 72, said at his polling place on Pittsburgh's South Side, where dozens of people were already waiting when he arrived shortly after polls opened. "Usually, if I had to wait, it would be three to four minutes. There's just a lot of interest in this election."

Turnout at another Pittsburgh precinct clearly was exceeding that of the Bush-Gore race four years ago, said Jay Troutman, the judge of elections at the polling place.

"A good clip is one [voter] per minute, and we've exceeded that," Troutman said about 90 minutes after the polls opened.



Poll volunteer Ethel Dunson waits for voters to finish in Columbus, Ohio, early Tuesday morning. Lines at that point were needed about two hours long.

"We wanted to come out early to vote but we never expected such a heavy turnout," Linda Russell said as she stood in line before polls opened in Raleigh, N.C.

Elsewhere in North Carolina, lines of voters snaked down sidewalks and across a street at a Durham precinct, where one man brought a chair to ease the wait.

Republican U.S. Senate candidate E.J. Pipkin had to wait in a line that wound out the door before he voted at about 7:20 a.m. at an elementary school in Stevensville, Md.

Pipkin said it was exciting to see such a large turnout. "We've been pushing the message that voting matters, who's in office matters, and I think we're seeing a direct result of that today with this kind of turnout," Pipkin said. "It bodes well for our democracy."

About 100 people were already in line when Macon County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh went to cast her own ballot shortly after the polls opened in Warren, Mich.

"I'm predicting up to 75 percent [turnout] in Macon County," she said. "Every indication I have ... is that this is the election for people. It still seems very polarized — they're either going to support the president or get him out of there."

Up to 7 inches of snow fell in the Texas Panhandle, and Randall County Clerk Sue Bartoli-

no warned voters to be careful on the roads. A winter weather advisory was posted.

In nearby Texas County, Okla., the earlier arrival of the wintry conditions had led many older voters to turn in absentee ballots Monday.

In southwest Kansas, the polling place for several precincts in Garden City had to be moved because the furnace didn't work in the Finney County 4-H building. Temperatures were in the low 30s.

Snow was likely to cut turnout in nearby Grant County, but "the ones who vote all the time will get out," said county Clerk Linda McHenry.

The parking lot was crowded at Dent Middle School in Columbia, S.C., and about 200 people were waiting in line when the polls opened at 7 a.m.

"It's not normal," said 75-year-old Timothy Evans Sr., a longtime poll worker. "Forty years ago, we had a little over 100 voters. It's really almost double that amount."

Strangers shared umbrellas in the rain as voters endured waits of two hours or more at polling places throughout Ohio.

"It's our job," Amanda Karel, 25, an Ohio State University graduate student, said as she waited to vote at a banquet hall in Columbus.

"It's what we're supposed to do."

Then she joked: "It's only way to make the ads stop."

Ohio gets challengers

CINCINNATI — Giving a pre-dawn Election Day boost to the GOP, a federal appeals court early Tuesday cleared the way for political parties to send in people to challenge voters' eligibility at Ohio polling places. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to step in.

Overturning the orders of two federal judges, a three-judge panel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 early Tuesday that the presence of Election Day challengers was allowed under state law. It granted emergency stays that will allow Republicans and Democrats one challenger per precinct each.

GOP watchers limited

SIoux FALLS, S.D. — A federal judge partially granted Democratic U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle's request to limit the activities of Republican poll watchers after he accused his opponent and the GOP of intimidating American Indian voters.

The decision early Tuesday morning by U.S. District Judge Lawrence Piersol applies only to voters in Charles Mix County.

As part of the ruling, Republican poll watchers are prohibited from following American Indian voters out of polling places. They are also prohibited from taking down the license plate numbers of American Indians' vehicles.

Voting from space

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — With a quick computer keystroke, space station astronaut Leroy Chiao became the first American to vote for president from space, casting an encrypted ballot via e-mail and urging fellow countrymen to go to the polls Tuesday.

"It was just a small thing for me, but it is important symbolically to show that every vote does count," Chiao said from the international space station a few hours after the polls opened 225 miles below.

From The Associated Press

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After tense race, voters are polarized opposites

BY TERENCE HUNT
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON—The presidential race of 2004 lumbered into history as the longest and the most expensive, a wartime election promising a nail-biter of a finish and a bitter residue of political division and polarization.

The country was split down the

middle between President Bush and Democratic challenger Sen. John Kerry, and the nation's politics were so polarized that it seemed unlikely the winner would find common ground with opponents any time soon.

Regardless of the outcome, half of the country was sure to be unhappy, given the division of opinion. Recounts, recriminations and

Analysis

lawsuits seemed almost inevitable much like four years ago when Bush lost the popular vote and claimed the White House on the basis of a split Supreme Court decision.

A surge in voter registration and the biggest voter mobilization campaign ever added an element of uncertainty.

There were many ways to describe the presidential contest. It was a competition of two men of wealth and privilege, both graduates of Yale University and members of the same secret society, Skull and Bones.

It was the first White House election since the nation was shaken by its worst-ever terrorist attack, the first since the American-led invasion of Iraq, and the first in wartime since Vietnam.

Voters had a choice between a wartime president and a wartime hero, and the dominant issues were Iraq and terrorism.

Osama bin Laden edged into the race with a videotaped appearance that reminded Americans of the 9/11 attacks, underscoring the terrorism theme at the heart of Bush's campaign. Late polls showed impact from the tape.

Iraq towered over the election with grisly scenes of beheadings, bombings and massacres, reminding Americans of the steep price of war. The nation has lost more than 1,100 troops in Iraq, and voters were split on whether the United States should have invaded.

While incumbents often delegate negative campaigning to their vice presidents, Bush did not shrink from the task, branding Kerry weak and indecisive and the kind of leader who would put the nation at risk.

"This president has been the bad cop in chief," said Norman Ornstein, a political analyst at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. He described the race as "the nastiest in our lifetimes. It doesn't maybe equal the 19th century but it's hard to watch this without getting an upset stomach if you care about politics."

In terms of policy, the two candidates offered some of the sharpest differences in many years on issues such as taxes, health care, Social Security, abortion, gay marriage, gun control, embryonic stem cell research, energy, the environment and America's place in

the world.

In Congress, Democrats and Republicans regarded each other with suspicion and hostility. Bush fueled the partisanship by refusing to compromise with Democrats on issues from taxes to judicial appointments.

Rather than trim his sails after the disputed election of 2000, Bush believed he had a mandate and turned to his Republican base rather than try to attract supporters on the other side.

The bad feelings were exacerbated by a campaign in which both candidates tried to rouse their core supporters with negative attacks on the other side. "Under these circumstances it's likely that the honeymoon for the next president, even one who manages to win clearly, is at best a long weekend," Ornstein said.

In addition, 34 Senate races and 43 House contests were on the ballot. Republicans were heavily favored to retain their majority in the House for the fifth election in a row, and Democrats had an uphill battle to gain control of the Senate, too.

One thing that made this year distinctive was the incredible flood of money that poured in despite the McCain-Feingold law that was supposed to control campaign cash. Total spending in the presidential and congressional races approached a breathtaking \$4 billion. It also was the longest race. With more than 40 trips to Pennsylvania and 30 to Florida underlining his most frequent destinations over four years, Bush arguably had been running for re-election since he took office, and.

The Democrats had their candidate ready on March 2—the earliest in modern times—when Kerry clinched the nomination with a string of Super Tuesday primary victories.

Terence Hunt has covered the White House for The Associated Press since the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

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World anxiously awaits election results

The Associated Press

People outside the United States could only watch, wait and vent as Americans lined up to vote Tuesday in an election that provoked an extraordinary degree of emotional involvement beyond U.S. borders.

Leaders, news media and ordinary people were riveted by the contest between President Bush and Sen. John Kerry, convinced that a world ruled by the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq, the war on terrorism, and cultural and religious conflict had a huge stake in the outcome.

Plenty of foreign politicians

have personal stakes in the outcome — and in these circles the choice is more balanced.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, for instance, have signaled their preference for Bush.

"I don't want to interfere in another country's election, but I'm close to Bush so I'd like him to do well," said Koizumi, who sent 500 Japanese troops to Iraq on a humanitarian mission.

Putin has said a Bush defeat would mean a "new impulse" for terrorism, though he has declined to make an explicit endorsement.

Bush has toned down criticism of Russia's heavy handed campaign against separatist rebels in Chechnya in return for Putin's support in the war on terror.

The politicians who were keeping quiet — the usual practice regarding another country's elections — had a big stake as well.

In Cairo, Egypt, one satellite station is urging Arab viewers phone in their votes for President Bush or Sen. John Kerry. Kuwait television planned live coverage overnight until official results are in. The U.S. elections are Page 1 news in almost every newspaper in the region.

No matter the medium, the message was the same: The result of Tuesday's U.S. presidential election will greatly impact the Middle East. And Arabs are paying close attention.

"In the Arab world, the consensus is that the Bush tenure has made matters worse, especially for the Palestinians and the Iraqis," said an editorial in the Jordan Times. "Bush's rule has also destabilized the entire world. The war on terrorism appears not to have made a dent in organizations like al-Qaida and others like it."

"Arabs and Muslims are looking forward to the election results. Maybe if Kerry wins, then

there will be some hope to resolve the issues of Iraq and Palestine," said an editorial in Jordan's pro-government Al Rai newspaper. Bush is widely viewed in the Arab world as unflinchingly pro-Israel.

Ali Oula Ersan, head of the Arab Writers' Union in Syria, said Arabs are closely following the U.S. elections because "they are directly affected by their results due to the U.S. occupation of Iraq and its repercussions on neighboring countries" as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict. "We hope that the next U.S. president would take a balanced and objective stand toward our basic issues, especially in Palestine," he said.



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Map showing location of YOKOHAMA in Tokyo.

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Military overseas turnout might be down

Stars and Stripes

Although final tallies will not be counted for three months, voters in the military communities of Europe and the Middle East appear to have voted at lower rates this year than overall overseas military personnel did in 2000.

More than 5,000 last-minute ballots were mailed from U.S. post offices in Europe, according to figures released by the Department of Defense, Army and Navy. As of Election Day, 88,788 ballots had been mailed from APO and FPO addresses in Europe, up 5,250 from Thursday.

The Air Force mailed 42,130 ballots, the Army mailed 36,203 and the Navy, 10,455. The eligible pool of military and depending voters in Europe is about 150,000 people, meaning roughly 59 percent of eligible voters mailed back ballots for this year's election.

Evidence so far shows fewer ballots sent than in 2000 presidential election

The number would not include any e-mail or fax ballots that some states allow.

Figures were not immediately available for voters in the Pacific military community.

"We will not know the precise number of military personnel who participated in this election until the individual states report their absentee numbers to the Federal Election Commission," said Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke, a Pentagon spokeswoman. "The 'Help America Vote' act requires that states report the number of ballots transmitted to overseas voters, the number returned to overseas voters and the number cast by overseas voters no later than 90 days after the election."

In 2000, after the Federal Voting

Assistance Program spent \$35 million in a "Get Out the Vote" campaign, participation in the presidential elections among uniformed citizens stationed overseas reached 69 percent, according to the 16th Annual Federal Voting Assistance Program report, issued by the Pentagon in December 2001.

The 2000 military overseas voting rate represented a 5 percentage point increase in uniformed overseas participation over the 1996 election, the report said.

Among federal civilian employees overseas in 2000, meanwhile, voting participation was 65 percent.

The general U.S. public voting rate in 2000 was 51 percent.

The U.S. Postal Service and Department of Defense officials said in June that overseas service members should cast their absentee ballots no later than Oct. 11.

Mideast turnout lower

As of last week, only about 25 percent of eligible voters deployed to the Middle East had sent in ballots, a voting assistance officer in Kuwait said. In the Central Command's theater of operations, 48,935 ballots were mailed as of Oct. 26.

Lt. Col. Korya James, a voting assistance officer in Kuwait who compiled the numbers, referred all questions this week regarding the ballots to the public affairs officers at CENTCOM's headquarters in Florida, who referred Stripes back to Coalition Forces Land Component Command in Kuwait.

"We do not have specific numbers for any at this time," said Army Maj. Martin Downie, a spokesman at CFLC.

Some troops serving in the war in Iraq — this year's hottest election topic — say the military emphasized absentee voting, but some got their ballots late in the race. Others are still receiving them.

Spec. Ivan Burden, however, was proactive. He works in an International Zone post office himself, and didn't want to take any chances.

"I found it very easy," Burden said. "I actually voted when I was home on leave."

"That's cheating," interrupted another postal soldier, Spec. Zach Powers. He never got his ballot.

"We're still receiving absentee ballots," Powers said. "Ballots are the most important thing in the postal system right now. They take priority over everything."

Military absentee ballots, and whether they were postmarked on time, became a front-line battle in the legal chaos that followed the 2000 election.

Soldiers said that first sergeants and company commanders had been getting the word out to troops to vote.

"I'm, for party neutral, if you will, but it's our's important to make sure that every servicemember has the ability to vote in their local, state and federal elections," said Lt. Col. Steve Boylan, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Iraq. "How they vote and whether they vote is up to them."

For some, the ballot wait led to creativity.

"I voted, but it took a little while for my absentee ballot to get here," said Pfc. Joseph Rogers of the 89th Military Police Brigade at Camp Victory. "So I had a buddy who was going home on leave mail it for me. I've got a buddy who got his yesterday."

One soldier said requesting a ballot early was the best tack. "For me, it was pretty easy," said Sgt. Christian Hughes of the Washington Army National Guard. "I had it a few months ago. I think it depends on when they requested it."

Some soldiers simply chose not to cast their ballots. "I would have voted if it was easier, myself," said Pfc. Sherwin James, deployed to Logistics Support Area Anacosta.

Other soldiers agreed. Pfc. Aaron O'Hara with B Co. of the 94th Engineer Battalion from Schofield Barracks in Hawaii was at Anacosta, said although his squad leader explained the process, it was too much effort to apply for a ballot. He did vote if his unit handed out ballots, he would have, he added.

"I guess I'm too lazy," he said.

Staff writer Ward Sanderson and Juliana Gitter contributed to this report.

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Marines in Iraq: More going on than election

BY EDWARD HARRIS

The Associated Press

NEAR FALLUJAH, Iraq — As Americans head to the polls, U.S. Marines squaring off against Iraqi insurgents say they expect to vote.

But Iraq for years no matter who wins the White House. What they want is better equipment, more pay and a clear exit strategy.

Many Marines fighting in Iraq's Sunni Triangle don't talk much about the race between President Bush and Sen. John Kerry. For them, the focus is on staying alive and following orders that they don't expect to change: Defeat the insurgents and help rebuild Iraq.

But what really concerns them is the prospect of an open-ended mission lacking a final benchmark for victory.

"We obviously can't just leave Iraq now and waste all of the good work the Marines have done here," said Hospital Corpsman Quinton Brown, a 24-year-old with the 1st Marine Division.

"Regardless, I want to see the next president give us an idea how we're going to end the occupation," he added.

Marines based in the dangerous areas west and north of Baghdad are preparing for a possible big offensive against insurgent strongholds if they get the go-ahead from interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.

But Marine officers caution that even if U.S. forces overrun the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, they don't expect the insurgents to evaporate. And troops on the ground say they've heard nothing from either Bush or Kerry indicating that they will soon leave Iraq.

With violence expected to intensify ahead of Iraqi elections planned for January as a crucial step in the effort to stabilize the country and entrench democracy, Marines say they need better equipment, particularly well-armored Humvees.

"I hope the Marine Corps gets more funding, for better weapons, better gear and better Humvees," said Lance Cpl. Jonathan Sandoval. "The next president needs to stop stalling. We're waiting around here for nothing. We're waiting for nothing." Sandoval said of the insurgents: "At the same time, we're losing a lot of good Marines."

PACAF mulls boosting theater assets

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

Pacific Air Forces could boost significantly the speed and accuracy of its response to regional "hot spots" by permanently basing in the theater weapons with the latest high-tech information-gathering and warfighting advances, PACAF officials say.

They say they're considering permanently basing intelligence, surveillance-reconnaissance, strike and refueling assets in the Pacific as part of an "ISR strike task force."

Planners indicated Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, appears to be a leading candidate to receive new assets—including fighter aircraft—among Pacific Command bases.

Though no decision has been made, said Col. Mark Tapper, PACAF's 502nd Air Operations Group commander, "Guam is a tremendous location. ... Guam has a bunch of great attributes to make it a worthy location."

The ISR strike package could include Global Hawks, F/A-22s and bombers. Six B-52s now are based temporarily at Andersen.

"It's under review," Tapper said. "We see in the near term bombers stationed in Guam are a good thing." They deter potential adversaries and assure allies of the U.S. military's commitment to the Pacific region, he said.

Although PACAF can marshal resources

Planners: Guam prime candidate to stage intel, surveillance strike force

for an ISR strike task force, not all of them now are Pacific Command-based, Tapper said. "Permanently basing strike and ISR assets in the Pacific theater provides the combat commander with immediate flexibility to create effects" throughout the theater, he said. And the Air Force, as the service usually charged with air and space tasks, is responsible for providing the combat commander with immediate recon or strike capability in "minutes or hours, not days or weeks."

"The only way to provide that capability in the near term is to base strike and ISR assets in the Pacific," Tapper added.

The Pacific's combatant commander, Adm. Thomas B. Fargo, consults with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and secretary of defense on military strategy in the Pacific and lists what's needed for the next five to 20 years, Tapper said. "The secretary of defense and the joint staff work diligently to try and get those resources."

Maj. Gen. David Deputila, PACAF's air and space operations director, told the Inside the

Air Force newsletter recently that a fighter presence—a key ISR component—would be established at Andersen; no aircraft now are assigned to the Guam base, which mostly receives aircraft transiting through or temporarily deployed to the region.

The PACAF commander, Gen. Paul V. Hester, in an interview with Stripes last week spoke highly of Andersen's growth potential, calling it "such a wonderful piece of property. It's properly positioned; it's an American territory with the U.S. flag flying over the top of it; it doesn't provide an extended burden on other countries as we continue to discuss burden sharing and burden of population in [South] Korea and in Japan."

"So Guam," he said, "certainly is an opportunity for us to look at a place to increase our presence, if we want to add missions."

Tapper said if additional assets were to go to Guam, "the decision to start that process would be in the next five years" because the Defense Department keeps to a five-year planning cycle.

E-mail Jennifer H. Svan at: svan@pstrips.osd.mil

Kitty Hawk sailor dies

YOKOSUKA, Japan — A USS Kitty Hawk sailor collapsed Monday while working on the ship and died hours later at the base hospital, Kitty Hawk officials said Tuesday.

The 35-year-old petty officer first class collapsed about 4 p.m. while working in one of the ship's aircraft maintenance work centers, said Lt. Cmdr. Brook DeWalt, a Kitty Hawk spokesman. The sailor, whose name was not released, died at 10:23 p.m. local time.

The sailor's death appeared to have been caused by a "pre-existing medical condition," DeWalt said. "It doesn't appear to have been caused by work accident or injury."

DeWalt said the hospital had determined the sailor's cause of death but that he was not authorized to release it. Hospital officials could not be reached for comment.

The sailor was conscious when he was taken off the ship, DeWalt said.

From staff reports

Yokota chopper makes precautionary landing

BY VINCE LITTLE

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — A UH-1N helicopter crew assigned to the 459th Airlift Squadron made a precautionary landing Tuesday morning on a baseball field near Mount Fuji, 374th Airlift Wing officials said.

The three-member aircrew, performing a visual flight rules training mission on the Kanto Plain outskirts, landed the helicopter safely at 10:40 a.m. in Numazu City in Shizuoka prefecture after detecting a hydraulic system leak, said 1st Lt. Warren Comer, a 374th Airlift Wing spokesman.

"When a light comes on in an aircraft, if it's an emergency situation, the things most pilots are taught is if you can land now in a safe location, it's best to do that," he said. "That's the better alternative rather than making it a larger incident by not being able to control your aircraft."

No one was injured and the aircraft was not damaged, Comer said. But it was the second incident involving a Yokota helicopter in three months. On Aug. 19, another UH-1N crew was forced to make a precautionary landing in Yokohama after encountering engine problems.

The two instances appear unrelated, Comer said; grounding the helicopters for an extended safety review is not planned.

"It's a little early on that. ... At the moment, we're assessing the current situation," he said. "We just want to fix this problem right now."

Maintenance crews dispatched to Numazu in another UH-1 from

Yokota determined that a failed hydraulic pump led to the leak, he added. The mechanism lets pilots steer aircraft smoothly. "Once it goes out, it can still be flown, but steering becomes much more difficult," Comer said.

The technicians were replacing the pump Tuesday night; the helicopter was to be flown back to Yokota on Wednesday morning, a 374th Airlift Wing release stated.

"We are extremely grateful for the cooperation and leadership provided by the Shizuoka Police Department and the Fuji Defense Facilities Administration Office in Numazu," Col. Douglas E. Kreulen, 374th Airlift Wing vice commander, stated in the release.

"We are deeply sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused."

The crewmembers, who were not identified, were on a routine training flight. They took off from Yokota at 10 a.m. Tuesday and were to return by 12:30 p.m., said Miko Morita, a 374th Airlift Wing spokeswoman. They were returned to the base after the landing.

A Numazu City spokesman said local children use the baseball field, which is near a coast but away from residential neighborhoods. No one was near during the helicopter's landing, he said.

City officials indicated they'd hoped for an advance warning but praised the crew for avoiding populated areas, he added, saying there were no plans to protest the incident.

Hana Kusumoto contributed to this report.

E-mail Vince Little at: little@pstrips.osd.mil

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Violence up as pressure rises on Allawi

Baghdad, Mosul car bombs kill at least 12; no word on latest hostages taken in Iraq

BY MARIAM FARM
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Car bombs killed at least a dozen people in Baghdad and another major city Tuesday as pressure mounted on interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi to avoid launching a full-scale U.S. attack on the insurgent stronghold Fallujah.

There was no word on an American and two other foreigners abducted Tuesday night in Baghdad, although the kidnappers freed two Iraqi guards also captured in the bold attack. Some diplomats speculated the foreigners may have been seized to pressure the Americans against a Fallujah attack.

U.S. officials denied a report broadcast by Arabic satellite television stations that an American soldier was abducted in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad.

At least eight people died early Tuesday when an explosives-laden car slammed into concrete blast walls and protective barriers surrounding the Education Ministry and exploded in Baghdad's Sunni Muslim district Azimiyah.

Ten others were injured, according to Al-Numan Hospital. Officials at a second hospital, Baghdad Medical City Hospital, reported two more deaths and 19 injured.

In Mosul, 225 miles northwest of Baghdad, a car bomb exploded near a military convoy carrying an Iraqi general, killing four civilians and wounding at least seven soldiers, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

Iraqi police said the attack was an assassination attempt on Iraqi



A U.S. soldier guards the site of a car bomb explosion Tuesday near an office of the Iraqi Ministry of Education in Baghdad.

Maj. Gen. Rashid Felehi, commander of a special task force, who escaped injury. Felehi apparently was on his way to a news conference to talk about the role of the task force, according to police and media reports.

The fresh violence occurred as American forces prepare for a major offensive against Fallujah

and other Sunni Muslim militant strongholds north and west of Baghdad in hopes of curbing the insurgency so that national elections can be held by the end of January.

U.S. forces have pounded insurgent positions around Fallujah almost daily, but American officials say the go-ahead for an all-out assault must come from Allawi, the

interim prime minister.

However, new pressure mounted Tuesday on Allawi, a Shiite, to forego an assault and to continue negotiating with the hard-line Sunni clerics who run the city, which has become a symbol of Iraqi resistance throughout the Arab world.

Mohammed Bashar al-Faidhi, spokesman of the Association of Muslim Scholars, said Tuesday that a boycott call by the influential clerical group "will have a great resonance among the people of Iraq."

Such a call by Iraqi Sunnis would probably draw little support among the Shiite majority, believed to compromise about 60 percent of Iraq's nearly 26 million people. "It's not reasonable to call for elections that are supposed to be democratic and yet a peaceful city gets attacked by weapons, missiles, planes and bombs," said Nabil Mohammed, a political science professor at Baghdad University's Center for International Studies.

He said an all-out attack would "elicit a very big response and support from Iraqis."

U.S. officials believe Fallujah is the stronghold of an al-Qaida faction led by Jordanian extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, responsible for numerous car-bombings and beheadings of foreigners.

Al-Zarqawi's group claimed in a Web posting Tuesday that it beheaded Japanese broadcaster Shosuke Koda after Tokyo refused to withdraw troops from Iraq.

Al-Zarqawi was abducted last month from her car in Baghdad. No group has claimed responsibility for her kidnapping and there was no sign on the brief broadcast of any banner identifying who held her.

Al-Zarqawi decided not to air the video because it was "too graphic," spokesman Jihad Ballout said.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Monday, at least 1,122 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 858 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department as of Monday. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated Monday at 10 a.m. EST.

The British military has reported 70 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 984 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 749 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers as of Friday.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A Marine was killed Sunday by a bomb in Ramadi, the military said.

The latest identifications released by the military:

■ Marines killed Saturday in Anbar province, Iraq, all except Courtney assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base, Hawaii:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Jeremy D. Bow, 20, Lemore, Calif.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. John T. Byrd II, 23, Fairview, W.Va.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Travis A. Fox, 25; Cowpens, S.C.

■ Marine Pfc. John Lukac, 19; Las Vegas

■ Marine Pfc. Christopher J. Lapka, 22; Peoria, Ariz.

■ Marine Pfc. Andrew G. Riedel, 19; Northglenn, Colo.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Michael P. Scarborough, 28; Washington, Ga.

■ Marine Sgt. Kelley L. Courtney, 28; Macon, Ga.; assigned to 3rd Infantry Battalion, III MEF, Okinawa, Japan.

■ Army Spc. Segun Frederick Akintade, 34; New York; died Thursday in Abil Allah, Iraq, when his unit was attacked with an explosive and small arms fire, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, New York.

■ Army Sgt. Maurice Keith Fortson, 25; Fort Worth, Texas; died Friday in Ramadi, Iraq, when an explosive detonated near his vehicle; assigned to 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Humphreys, Korea.

■ Marine 1st Lt. Matthew D. Lynch, 25; Jericho, N.Y.; died Sunday in Anbar province, Iraq; assigned to 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Group threatens to give CARE hostage to al-Zarqawi

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The kidnappers of aid worker Margaret Hassan threatened to turn her over to an al-Qaida-affiliated group within 48 hours if the British government refuses to pull its troops from Iraq, Al-Jazeera television reported Tuesday.

Al-Jazeera broadcast a video of

a hooded gunman but did not air the sound. Instead, the newscaster said the kidnappers gave Britain 48 hours to meet their demands, "primarily the withdrawal" of British troops.

Otherwise, the 59-year-old Hassan will be handed over to the al-Qaida in Iraq group, headed by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The group has be-

headed a number of other hostages, including three Americans and a Briton.

It was the first time a deadline has been set in the abduction of Hassan. The newscaster said the station declined to broadcast the entire tape because "of the hostage's condition."

Hassan, an Irish-British-Iraqi citizen who heads CARE Interna-

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AF develops new version of test uniform

BY LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Air Force's first test version of its new field uniform was not a hit with the force, so the service has developed a new version that is a little less "distinctive," according to Senior Master Sgt. Jacqueline Dean, chief of the Air Force Uniform Board.

The new test uniform uses almost the same subdued gray, tan and green the Army uses in its new battle dress uniforms.

While the Army and Marines are using a fully digitized computer-generated pattern on their fabric, the Air Force is using a computerized version of the tiger-stripe pattern of the first prototype.

The original prototype was introduced after Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John Jumper decided last year that airmen needed something "distinctive" that would meet the needs of his service. It was a design that was a direct nod to the tiger-stripe jungle uniforms worn by U.S. troops in Vietnam.

Jumper wanted something other than the olive drab or desert-tan BDUs the Air Force now shares with the Army (except for flight crews and pilots, who wear green jumpsuits).

The colors of the prototype uniform included blue, green and tan. There was even a tiny, repeat-



LISA BURGESS/Stars and Stripes

The new Air Force test uniform, with a subdued digital tiger-stripe pattern, is on the left. The originally test colors, right, proved to be "too distinctive" for airmen, officials said.

ed "U.S. Air Force" motif embedded in the pattern.

The results of six months of tests and surveys still are not completely tallied, but service officials released one statistic Tuesday: 91 percent of wear-testers "loved being in a distinctive uniform," Dean said.

However, "it was a little too distinctive," she said.

The prototype was worn by 700 airmen at seven bases for six months, starting this spring.

Officials also opened a Web site early this summer, asking for comment from active, reserve, and Air National Guard airmen.

A total of 100,000 airmen registered their comments, along with 25,000 additional airmen whom

officials polled in order to take a "more scientific sampling" of opinions, Dean said.

Along with the fabric's color, the biggest negative reaction to the prototype was the lack of camouflage properties in the pattern, she said.

The Air Force's answer to that issue was that "97 percent of the Air Force does not require a camouflage uniform," Air Force spokeswoman Jennifer Stephens said back in April.

"These [prototype] uniforms were never supposed to be worn on deployments," Dean said Tuesday. "They were for garrison use." So if the Air Force had adopted the original pattern, the plan was for the 3 percent of the force that needs camouflage — mainly spe-

cial operators — to be given uniforms "appropriate for the environments they work in," Stephens had said.

And deployed airmen, she said, would have returned to wearing the Army's DCUs if they were deployed, Dean said Tuesday.

With the new, subdued pattern, however, that plan has changed.

In fact, the new test audience for the uniform is not regular airmen, but special operators, who are the only group that will wear the second prototype, to check for its camouflage qualities, Stephens said Tuesday.

The new prototypes now are being manufactured. The number of testers and the length of the test has not been determined, Stephens said. However, Jumper expects to decide on whether or not to adopt the uniform in the beginning of 2005, she said.

The color of the fabric is the only major change to the second version of the new uniform, except for the cap: the service is returning to the familiar BDU cap because testers did not like the initial prototype, which was modeled on the Marine Corps' eight-point cap. The Air Force is keeping the same 50 percent cotton, 50 percent nylon wash-and-wear fabric blend as the first prototype, because "the biggest [property] the testers liked was the permanent-press" quality, Dean said.

E-mail Lisa Burgess at: lbj@starsandstripes.com

Military association offering 50 scholarships

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Military Officers Association of America officially kicked off its 2005 "Base Post Scholarship program Nov. 1, offering \$1,000 scholarships to 50 dependents of active-duty personnel worldwide.

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Al-Qaida bleeding U.S. economy, bin Laden says

BY DONNA BRYSON
The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — In rhetoric similar to critical U.S. campaign headlines, Osama bin Laden accused President Bush of going to war for Iraq's oil, and said the American people would be the losers.

Bin Laden, whose al-Qaida network carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, proved he's kept a close eye on U.S. politics as he detailed al-Qaida's strategy of bleeding America bankrupt, even as Americans weighed their presidential votes largely on the issues of terror and the economy.

He provided a financial analysis of al-Qaida's destruction in his latest 18-minute video, a full transcript of which was posted Monday on the Internet.

According to bin Laden's math, each \$1 spent on strikes has cost the United States \$1 million in economic fallout and military spending, including emergency funding for Iraq and Afghanistan.

"As for the size of the economic deficit, it has reached record astronomical numbers," bin Laden said, estimating the deficit at more than \$1 trillion. In reality, spending in the war against terror and other factors have resulted in an expected \$377 billion shortfall for 2003 — the highest deficit since World War II when inflation is factored out. The total U.S. national debt is near \$7.4 trillion.

Bin Laden credited the holy warriors he fought with against the Soviets in Afghanistan two decades ago with having "bled Russia for 10 years, until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat."

"So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy," bin Laden said in the tape that appeared near the end of a U.S. campaign that has focused on the war on terror as well as the founding U.S. economy.

Bin Laden claimed al-Qaida was winning its war with the United States, and that U.S. defense contractors linked to Bush "like Halliburton and its kind" were also benefiting, while the losers were "the American people and their economy."

Evan F. Kohlmann, a U.S.-based counterterrorism researcher, said it was as if bin Laden was following the news from America, perhaps on satellite TV, and drawing shrewd assumptions about what confounds Americans.

"He is trying to create doubts in America's mind that this war is worth the cost," Kohlmann said.

Bin Laden's latest statement was a selective reading of history.

Internal problems and U.S. help, not just the Arab "holy wars," contributed to the collapse of the Soviet experiment in Afghanistan. The U.S. economy was experiencing trouble before Sept. 11.

UAE president dead at 86

The president of the United Arab Emirates, who helped forge a federation from seven backwater Persian Gulf states and built it into a high-tech crossroads of gleaming skyscrapers, has died at 86.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan had been ailing for several years and did not attend Arab summits. He had a kidney transplant in August 2000.

His eldest son, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has been heir apparent since 1969, when his father named him crown prince of Abu Dhabi, the capital and richest of the seven emirates.

The rulers of the seven emirates must choose the next president and are expected to pick Sheikh Khalifa, though it was not clear when a decision would be made.

From The Associated Press



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Dutch filmmaker who criticized Islam slain; suspect arrested

BY TOBY STERLING
The Associated Press

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands — A filmmaker who is a relative of the painter Vincent van Gogh was slain in an Amsterdam street Tuesday after receiving death threats over a movie he made criticizing the treatment of women under Islam.

A suspect, a 26-year-old man with dual Dutch-Moroccan citizenship, was arrested after a shootout with officers that left him wounded, police said.

Filmmaker Theo van Gogh had been threatened after the August airing of the movie "Submission," which he made with a right-wing Dutch politician who had renounced the Islamic faith of her birth.

Police had kept watch on Van Gogh's house as protection for a period immediately after the film's release.

In a recent radio interview, the 47-year-old Van Gogh — who is the great-grandson of the brother

of Vincent van Gogh, who was also named Theo — dismissed the threats and called the movie "the best protection could have."

Van Gogh

Police said Van Gogh's killer shot and stabbed his victim and left a note on his body. They declined to comment on reports that Van Gogh's neck was slashed.

The attacker fled to the nearby East Park, and was arrested after exchanging gunfire with police, police spokesman Eric Vermeulen said. Both the suspect and a policeman suffered minor injuries.

"Submission" told the fictional story of a Muslim woman forced into a violent marriage, raped by a relative and brutally punished for adultery.

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Guard adds enticements as recruitment dips



SPRINGFIELD (OHIO) NEWS-SUN/AP

Members of the Army National Guard's ECHO Company 1st-148 Infantry, stationed in Urbana, Ohio, hold hands with other military supporters during an April 2003 "Support Our Troops Rally" in Urbana. The Army National Guard is adjusting its recruiting strategy after falling short of recruiting goals.

BY JAMES HANNAH
The Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Free hunting and fishing licenses. More chances to get signing bonuses. Pink T-shirts for women.

The Army National Guard, which has fallen short of recruiting goals during the prolonged fighting in Iraq, is trying new marketing beyond the traditional enticement of college tuition aid.

"There are fewer people who are voluntarily expressing an interest — calling or returning postcards," said Lt. Col. Dan Kenkel, spokesman for the Guard in Nebraska.

Nationally, the Army Guard reached 88 percent of its goal of 56,000 recruits by the end of September, signing up 49,210.

"Recruiting is tougher than it's been in awhile," said James Sims, spokesman for the Ohio Guard, which is about 500 off its target of 2,100 recruits.

Guard officials around the country blame concerns about the Iraq war, Pentagon orders that keep some soldiers from leaving active duty and going into the Guard, and turnover among recruits, some of whom have been sent overseas.

Of the 100,000 Army Guard members sent to Iraq, about 110 have died.

In the past, young people saw enlisting as a way to get college tuition with little risk to themselves, said Lt. Col. Greg Hap-

good, spokesman for the Iowa National Guard. "Today, that risk has changed," he said.

The pink T-shirt bearing the words "Soldier Girl" was designed by Sgt. Stacey Weston, a recruiter in Indiana, to get the attention of potential recruits. She said the Guard quickly ran out of the first order of 800 shirts.

"A lot of young ladies are under the impression they can't be feminine if they join the military," Weston said. "I wanted to dispel that myth."

The Nebraska Guard has 87 soldiers short of its goal of 519 recruits. It is plastering several Dodge Stratuses with its decals and logos in hopes of catching the eye of potential recruits.

Ohio has used Hummers — with oversized tires, televisions and booming sound systems — for the past few years to draw a crowd. The Guard also plans to increase the number of recruiters from 81 to 106.

The number of job-skill categories that pay signing bonuses of \$3,000 to \$8,000 — such as driving heavy equipment — will be upped from 19 to 30 in the Kansas Army Guard. And thanks to the Legislature, its members will be eligible for free fishing and hunting licenses and passes to state parks beginning in January.

Recruiter Lt. Col. Jane Harris said there is no way to tell how many recruits have been influenced by the new marketing.

Defense says DA proved Peterson is a jerk,' not a killer

BY BRIAN SKOLOFF
The Associated Press

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. — Prosecutors failed to prove that Scott Peterson murdered his pregnant wife, Laci, and were telling jurors, "don't bother with the five months of evidence," a defense attorney said Tuesday.

As the defense closing argument got under way, Mark Geragos told jurors that prosecutors portrayed Peterson as a "jerk and a liar" but have not shown him to be guilty.

Geragos accused authorities of waffling on their theory of the crime, first claiming Peterson's affair with Amber Frey was his motive for murder, and later pointing to Peterson's desire to be free from marriage.

"Clearly Amber was not the motive. Nobody was going to kill Laci Peterson and her child for Amber Frey," Geragos said.

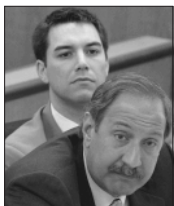
The jurors heard the prosecution closing argument Monday and were expected to begin deliberations as early as Wednesday. The trial began with jury selection in March and opening statements in June.

The prosecutors' motive, Geragos suggested, was to make jurors hate his client.

"If you hate him, then maybe what they're asking you to do is just convict him. Don't bother with the five months of evidence."

... Don't bother with the fact that the evidence shows clearly that he didn't do this and had absolutely no motive to do this," Geragos told jurors.

Prosecutors claim Peterson



Scott Peterson, background, and defense attorney Mark Geragos, listen during prosecutors' closing arguments Monday in Peterson's trial in Redwood City, Calif.

killed his wife on Dec. 23 or 24, 2002, then dumped her weightless body into San Francisco Bay. Defense lawyers claim someone else abducted and killed Laci.

Peterson is charged with two counts of murder, in the deaths of his wife and the fetus she carried. A first-degree murder conviction could bring the death penalty. Jurors will also be allowed to consider second-degree murder, which does not require evidence of premeditation and carries a sentence of 15 years to life in prison.

In their closing Monday, prosecutors made their case for premeditation, contending each bit of evidence is like a piece of a puzzle that convicts the former fertilizer salesman.



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

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Potential cervical cancer vaccine promising

BY MARILYNN MARCHIONE

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Efforts to develop the world's first vaccine to prevent cervical cancer took a key step forward Monday with test results suggesting that it can provide long-lasting protection.

Four years after getting the vaccine, 94 percent of women were protected from infection with the virus that causes most cervical cancers and none had developed worrisome precancerous conditions, a study showed.

"We're thrilled about these results. The immune responses seem to be really long-lasting," said Dr. Eliav Barr, who leads development of the vaccine for Merck & Co. The company plans to seek Food and Drug Administration approval next year for an expanded version of the vaccine that also could be used to prevent genital warts in both women and men.

The new study was funded by Merck and led by University of Washington researchers who presented results Monday at a meeting of the American Society for

Microbiology.

"They showed clear effectiveness," said Dr. Scott Hammer, a Columbia University infectious disease expert who reviewed the work but has no ties to Merck or the study. "This is a very important issue for women's health around the world."

If the vaccine makes it to market, it would be the second developed to prevent cancer. The hepatitis B vaccine has dramatically reduced the number of infections that progress to liver cancer.

Cervical cancer strikes nearly half a mil-

lion women worldwide each year and kills about half. In the United States, about 15,000 women get it and about 5,000 die.

Virtually all cases are caused by infection with human papilloma virus, or HPV, which is spread through sex. One strain, HPV-16, accounts for about half of all cervical cancers.

A previous study showed that HPV-16 infections were completely prevented in 748 women who had received the Merck vaccine 18 months earlier. None developed precancerous conditions either.

FDA labels imported erectile dysfunction supplements unsafe

BY DIDIEDRA HENDERSON

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday warned consumers not to buy or use Actra-Rx or Yilishen because the supplements contain an ingredient that could lower blood pressure to unsafe levels.

The FDA also instructed employees to block imports of the supplements, calling them "dangerous ... and even life-threatening."

Actra-Rx and Yilishen are promoted on Web sites as erectile dysfunction treatments that enhance men's sexual performance. Despite an all-natural label, Actra-Rx capsules contain prescription-strength sildenafil, the active drug ingredient in Viagra, according to a letter published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Viagra, produced by Pfizer, was approved by the FDA to treat erectile dysfunction. The recommended dose is 50 milligrams. Some men take as little as 25 mg, or as much as 100 mg.

According to "Sex, Lies and Niagara," published in the Feb. 4, 2004, issue of JAMA, chemical analyses found an average of 55 milligrams of sildenafil per capsule of Actra-Rx and Niagara Actra-Rx, another name under which the product has been sold.

"The use of such nonprescription substances may present health risks for individuals with contraindications to the use of sildenafil," wrote the authors.

Follow-up testing by the FDA confirmed that Actra-Rx contained prescription-strength levels of sildenafil.

A spokesman for the supplement's manufacturer, Los Angeles-based Body Basics, declined to comment. The company's Web site continues to advertise Actra-Rx as a "natural sexual enhancer" available in starter kits of 10 pills for \$78.99.

According to the FDA, sildenafil can interact with certain prescription drugs that contain nitrates or nitrates in illicit substances, significantly lowering blood pressure to unsafe levels.

Men at risk include those with diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or heart disease. Those individuals use medications that contain nitrates and often suffer erectile dysfunction.

When the agency approved Viagra, the first pill to treat impotence, on March 27, 1998, it warned consumers not to use the drug in combination with products containing nitrates to avoid worrisome lowering of blood pressure.

The FDA advised people who have taken Actra-Rx or Yilishen to stop using it and to consult a doctor regarding an alternate erectile dysfunction treatment.

Va. court hears arguments from convicted sniper

RICHMOND, Va. — John Allen Muhammad's lawyers argued before the state Supreme Court on Tuesday that the convicted sniper cannot be sentenced to death under a Virginia law because he did not pull the trigger in the October 2002 killing spree.

Muhammad was sentenced to the death after being convicted of two counts of capital murder last year in the shooting of Dean Harold Meyers near Manassas. Prosecutors had argued that Muhammad and co-hort Lee Boyd Malvo formed a sniper team and were thus equally culpable — even though Malvo said he pulled the trigger.

Defense lawyer Peter Greenspun contended that Virginia law allows the death penalty only for the triggerman in such cases, and that Muhammad should receive a life sentence instead.

But Justice Donald Lemons challenged Greenspun's argument, likening the sniper killings to a previous murder case in which two defendants were deemed eligible for the death penalty, one for smashing the victim's head with a rock, the other for holding the victim down.

The second count of capital murder on which Muhammad was convicted alleges the sniper killings were an act of terrorism.

Under that law, Muhammad would not have to be the triggerman to get the death penalty.

From The Associated Press




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"Mean Creek" flowed from bully encounter

BY TOMMY NGUYEN
The Washington Post

The bully in director Jacob Estes' "Mean Creek" is an overweight, obnoxious, hair-trigger explosive named George, and the neighborhood kids seeking revenge have George right where they want him. They're on a boat floating down the river. They've been thinking about this all day long. Strip the fat boy of his clothes and ditch him in the woods. But George won't be finding his way home today, as the events take a darker turn along the river's edge.

"These are good kids, out to serve some comeuppance to a guy who, from their perspective, rightfully deserves it. But it just gets out of control," says Estes, 31, whose first feature was one of the more talked-about entries at this year's Sundance Film Festival.

Because of its serious, often artful gaze upon youth violence and revenge plots, Estes' film has already been mentioned alongside Larry Clark's "Bully" and Gus Van Sant's Columbine-inspired "Elephant." So it doesn't take long for the conversation to turn to young bullies and their newer dramatic roles on recent movie screens.

In the past, on-screen, "the bullies that I can think of have been more one-dimensional," Estes says. For the most part, moviegoers could easily spot them as the biggest kids in the sandbox. Or the guys in leather or letterman jackets, strutting down a school hallway.

Estes' bully is an outcast, a pushy jerk. But he's also clever, funny and human enough at times that the other kids begin to have doubts about their original plan.

"I don't think George is necessarily a new kind of bully," Estes says. "It's more about looking into the heart of your adversary — recognizing humanity instead of objecti-

fying him."

In "Mean Creek," the kid who orchestrates the revenge plot, Marty (Scott Mechlowicz of "Eurotrip"), is a brute himself. What's more, much of the violence, taunting and personal demons gripping these young characters often come with a disarming exhibition of male sexual tension.

"I have no problem with anyone seeing that in my movie," the director says. "I think maybe Marty has anxieties about his own sexuality that's explored through the way he badgers his friend Clyde, whom I don't see as conflicted about his sexuality, considering that he has two gay fathers."

That detail of Clyde's life can seem curiously out of left field in the movie, but Estes explains that he himself was raised in Chicago by his father and his father's gay partner since the age of 4.

"There was a little window when I was innocent enough to think that it was normal, so I just talked about my gay dads and no one else," says Estes, whose father and mother divorced when he was 3. "But when the third grade came, every-

one was talking about it all of a sudden. When they started understanding what their homophobic parents were saying," he says, the kids at school started to make fun of him. "It became ugly to the point where I started denying that I had gay fathers."

Estes says he wasn't honest about his parents again until he reached the ninth grade. "By then I was intelligent enough to know



The Washington Post

Jacob Estes' "Mean Creek" casts a serious, artful gaze upon youth violence and revenge plots. The screenplay, Estes says, was inspired by his own experience as young adult with a bully at a basketball court.

that I had to be honest about my life. So, for the movie, I wanted to write characters who were as intelligent and as honest as I remember being at that age."

The director knew he wanted to write a screenplay reminiscent of the once-popular '80s genre that found teen-agers navigating a moral vacuum in the absence of adults — films like "River's Edge," "The Outsiders," "Over the Edge" and "Stand by Me." But Estes says the movie's revenge plot was inspired by a different emotional circumstance in his life. When he moved to San Francisco after graduation, Estes says he came

him, both verbally and physically. "He keyed into me, because I think he thought I was gay," says Estes, who has been married for the past three years. "There's a point in the movie when George is erupting on the boat and Clyde says, 'No one talks to people that way, George,' and that's what some of the other basketball players said to this guy while he was attacking me. His words were so hostile and ugly."

Revenge fantasies began to consume Estes. He eventually acted out on one of his less violent, more creative ideas: He doctored a photograph of a "No Parking" sign to read "No Greg" and put one on each basketball's backboard. The sign also listed Greg's negative attributes: "drunk," "racist," "homophobic" and so on.

"Then went away for a while, but Greg he came back and things got worse," Estes remembers. "I eventually had to stop playing

there."

Estes found the terrain he needed to complete "Mean Creek." The script eventually kick-started his filmmaking career. It got him into the directing program at AFI in 1998. That same year, the screenplay was one of five awarded the Motion Picture Academy's prestigious Nicholl Fellowship, beating out more than 4,400 other submissions. "But then Columbine happened, and the studios didn't want to touch anything that involved kids and violence, especially from a first-timer."

The script was shelved for several years until producer Rick Rosenthal, who teaches at AFI and directed "Bad Boys," stepped in to finance the film with a budget of \$500,000. The film was shot in 24 days, much of it on Washington's Lewis River near the Oregon border.

"It's more about looking into the heart of your adversary — recognizing humanity instead of objectifying him."

Jacob Estes
"Mean Creek" director

eye-to-eye with his George on a basketball court.

"I had this story that was brewing intellectually, but not really developing," he says. "When the two things merged, the whole plot erupted."

Estes says the guy, whose name was Greg, stood almost 7 feet tall and would always arrive drunk. But Estes, who is 6 feet 2, says for some reason the bully zeroed in on

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Vonage is a better way to call. Just plug your existing touchtone phone into a high speed Internet connection like a cable or DSL modem and you are ready to start saving. With Vonage you can call any phone number, anywhere in the world and save big. Our most popular plan offers unlimited calling in the U.S.A. and Canada for only \$24.99 a month. Plus, our international rates are always low. With Vonage you will save money on every call every month.

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- free call waiting
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Puppy love Patrick Koch, left, dressed as a minister and with New Horizons Service Dogs Inc., "marries" Patriot, the groom, and Carley, the bride, at the DeLand Animal Hospital's open house in DeLand, Fla. Both 1-year-old golden retrievers are in training to be service dogs.



Surf's up Bethany Hamilton surfs in Heat No. 4 of the Explorers Women division of the national Scholastic Surfing Association meet at Banyans surf spot in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Hamilton lost her left arm in a shark attack one year ago while surfing off the North Shore of Kauai.



Up, up, away Members of the Hot Shots Balloon crew sail over Carson City, Nev., in preparation for the Nevada Day Parade.



Just married Tom Loveday cradles his bride, Lena Scott, after the Homestead, Fla., couple exchanged vows underwater in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, about six miles off Key Largo, Fla. Included in the wedding party were 112 other divers. The event will be submitted to Guinness World Records to break the current largest underwater wedding mark.

Alcohol referendum

NY WILLIAMSON — William-son was until recent years one of a few towns in the state that prohibited the sale of alcohol.

The Monroe County town allowed no taverns, prohibited beer from being sold at convenience stores and mandated that no wine be sold in the restaurants.

But residents in 1996 voted to change laws on the books for decades to allow beer and wine coolers to be sold in grocery stores.

So voters here will be faced with four more propositions that, if passed, will further loosen restrictions to sell and serve alcohol in the town.

The propositions would allow restaurants to serve alcohol, farms to get winery licenses and liquor stores to open. Bars and taverns would still be banned.

Sweets for troops

MT BILLINGS — A local dentist has hit on a sweet idea: He plans to keep local kids from eating too much candy and gather sweets for the troops in Iraq.

Dr. Michael Stuart said he'll be at the Kmart parking lot to buy candy from trick-or-treaters for \$1 per pound.

Flyers advertising the offer have been distributed to about 20 elementary schools in the Billings area.

Stuart, a father of seven, said he doesn't expect the kids to turn over all of their goodies.

"We'll expect the children to pick out the good stuff they like and bring us the remainder," he said.

Lisa Kreiger, who handles patient services for the dental practice, said she and other staff members have worked on the project since September. The staff also is working with Oral B and the United Way to get toothbrushes to send to the troops, along with the candy.

Stuart said the buyback will offer kids money, keep them from eating too much candy and "it will bring a smile to the faces of our troops."

River gets a boost

NV RENO — A string of early season storms has boosted the flow of the Truckee River and allowed local water officials to halt all use of drought reserves. For the first time in a decade, the Truckee Meadows Water Authority recently was forced to tap into backup water supplies after continued drought lowered Lake Tahoe below its spillway. Storms that dumped up to 6 feet of snow in the Sierra Nevada over the last two weeks of October have swelled the river's flow to meet water demand.

Heart puts trial on hold

VT BENNINGTON — A retired New York police investigator accused of sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl at his Landgrove vacation home 17 years ago will still go on trial if he successfully undergoes a heart transplant.

Leonard Forte, 63, was convicted by a jury in 1988, but the conviction was overturned.

He suffered a series of heart attacks in the wake of the jury's verdict. In 1997, the Vermont attorney general's office conceded that the stress of a new trial would endanger Forte's life.

And so prosecutors have been biding their time while Forte waits for a heart transplant.

Church van flips

TX KILGORE — Two people remained hospitalized after a church van flipped over on Interstate 20 in East Texas, injuring a total of 14 occupants.

State troopers said the van carrying members of the Holy Prayer Apostolic Church to Kilgore was eastbound Sunday on I-20 when it left the roadway and the driver apparently overcorrected, causing the vehicle to flip numerous times, coming to rest in the median 1 mile west of the U.S. Highway 259 exchange.

Several passengers were thrown from the van, said Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Adam Bell.

"All 14 passengers have been transported to hospitals for injuries ranging from minor to critical," Bell told the Tyler Morning Telegraph on Monday's online edition.

Two victims remained at Louisiana State University Medical Center in Shreveport, said hospital spokeswoman Carmel Van Dyke. She said one patient was in fair condition and the other was still being evaluated.

Back on the beach

VA VIRGINIA BEACH — The last time anyone likely saw sailors marching in daily formations at Oceana Naval Air Station, it was just after World War II. Now, partly due to Hurricane Ivan, marching is back. The hurricane damaged the Navy's traditional seat of aviation training in Pensacola, Fla., in mid-September. So some recruits who were to begin training there are instead attending a new school at Oceana.

The heat is on, and costly

MN ST. PAUL — Minnesotans will soon reach for the thermostat, and it'll cost them more when they do. Xcel Energy Inc. is saying its residential customers could see rate increases of up to 35 percent between now and the end of March. CenterPoint Energy Minnegasco projects an 18 percent increase over the same period.

State officials estimate a typical residential gas customer will pay about \$127 for fuel last month versus \$96.30 last November.

Dessert wars

PA BELSANO — Forget "Kramer vs. Kramer." A legal fight brewing between doughnut maker Krispy Kreme and a seasonal ice cream stand could be called "Kreme vs. Kream."

Jack and Christine Hoover have run the Krispy Kream stand in Cambria County's Blacklick Township since 1968, keeping the name that had been in use since the stand opened in 1961.

Recently, the Hoovers received a letter from Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Inc. complaining of trademark infringement and indicating that more "formal steps" would be taken if they don't stop using their name.

The Winston-Salem, N.C., based Krispy Kreme registered its name in 1951.

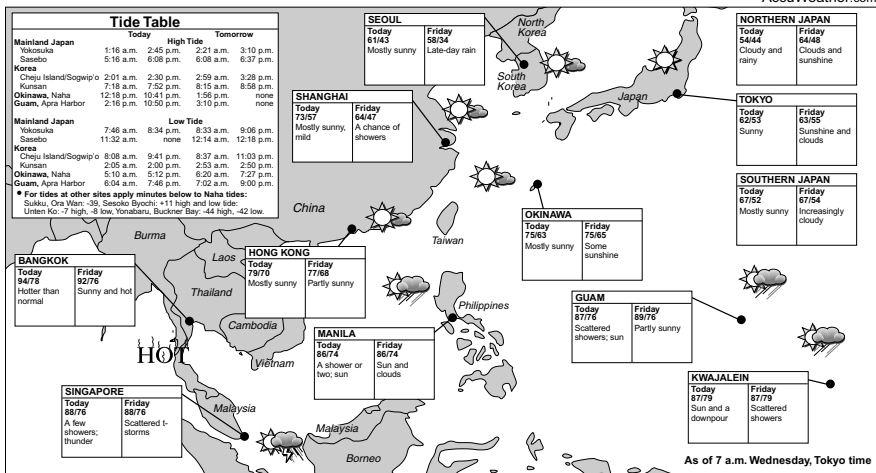
The Hoovers have hired a lawyer hoping to kill the doughnut company, but they worry that Krispy Kreme's dough may prevail.

Stories and pictures from wire reports

The Pacific Forecast

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Extended Forecasts

TOKYO

Saturday: Showers, high 64, low 54.
 Sunday: Mostly sunny, high 63, low 51.

KADENA

Saturday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 75, low 63.
 Sunday: Partly sunny, high 75, low 65.

SEUL

Saturday: Sunny, high 50, low 33.
 Sunday: Mostly sunny, high 57, low 41.

MANILA

Saturday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 86, low 72.
 Sunday: Showers, high 84, low 72.

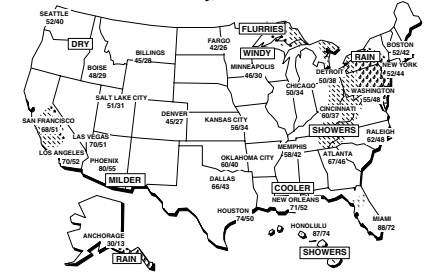
HAGATNA

Saturday: Partly sunny, high 87, low 76.
 Sunday: Partly sunny, high 89, low 78.

Tuesday's USA Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Albuquerque	49/27	Los Angeles	80/50
Amarillo	38/27	Little Rock	66/50
Anchorage	24/20	Louisville	73/48
Ashville	76/58	Miami	88/76
Baltimore	70/54	Milwaukee	48/38
Birmingham	79/64	Nashville	76/55
Bismarck	54/28	New York	59/50
Boise	54/36	Omaha	51/34
Boston	53/44	Orlando	88/66
Brownsville	79/56	Philadelphia	67/51
Buffalo	61/38	Phoenix	74/46
Burlington	48/36	Pittsburgh	78/44
Charleston, SC	87/65	Portland, OR	59/40
Charlotte	80/66	Portland, ME	48/43
Cleveland	69/42	Salt Lake City	48/32
Columbus, OH	71/45	St. Louis	55/44
Duluth	45/27	San Antonio	67/44
El Paso	52/32	San Diego	78/52
Hartford	52/46	San Juan	88/76
Helena	60/31	Tampa	87/72
Indianapolis	64/41	Tulsa	53/43
Jacksonville	86/64	Washington	71/54
Kansas City	52/40	Wichita	51/36

Thursday, November 04



U.S. Extended Forecast

An area of low pressure will track into the Ohio Valley Thursday. Rain will affect much of the Great Lakes and mid-Atlantic region. Temperatures along the East Coast will be quite cool as a result of the clouds and precipitation. New England will stay dry most of the day. Rain and snow showers will accompany a cold front that will slide through the Upper Midwest. High pressure over the Rockies will provide dry weather for most of the West and the Plains states. On Friday, the storm in the East will bring rain to New England. Very chilly air will drive into the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes. It will be tranquil in much of the rest of the country. Saturday will also be a quiet day in the West, the Plains and the Southeast.

Thursday's Pacific Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Bangkok	94/78	Iskani	66/50
Beijing	56/34	Kadena AB	75/63
Camp Casey	63/54	Kunsan AB	64/46
Christchurch	69/42	Kwajalein	87/79
Diego Garcia	83/75	Manila	86/74
Hagatna	87/76	Misawa AB	58/38
Hanoi	82/71	Osan	64/42
Hong Kong	79/70	Perth	69/52
Honolulu	87/74	Pusan	67/50

Thursday's World Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Acapulco	91/75	Katol	76/59
Athens	67/54	Buenos Aires	54/45
Auckland	63/51	Cairo	91/67
Baghdad	80/53	Cancun	83/59
Barbados	88/70	Cape Town	77/65
Barcelona	63/48	Geneva	59/50
Berlin	62/45	Montreal	45/36
Bermuda	76/69	Mogadishu	85/72
Brussels	55/41	Johannesburg	22/33
		Moscow	47/39
		Warsaw	55/49



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SCOREBOARD

AFN-TV & Radio

Thursday

APN-Sports, 2 a.m.—NBA: Houston at Detroit (td).

APN-Sports, 4:30 a.m.—NBA: Denver at L.A. Lakers (td).

APN-Sports, 5 p.m.—NBA: Miami at New Jersey (td).

APN-Atlantic, 9:30 a.m.—College football: South Atlantic at Alabama-Birmingham.

APN-Atlantic, 12:30 p.m.—NBA: L.A. Lakers at Utah.

APN-Sports, 5 p.m.—College football: Stanford at UCLA (td).

APN-Sports, 9 p.m.—NBA: Miami at New Jersey (td).

Friday

APN-Sports, 2 a.m.—Golf: PGA Tour Championship, first round.

APN-Atlantic, 9:30 a.m.—College football: Atlantic at Memphis.

APN-Sports, 10:30 a.m.—NBA: Cleveland at Miami (td).

APN-Sports, 12:30 p.m.—NBA: Minnesota at Atlanta (td).

APN-Sports, 3 p.m.—NBA: Inside the NBA.

APN-Sports, 9 p.m.—College football: Louisville at Memphis (td).

All times are Japan/Korea Standard Time. Dates indicate delayed broadcast. All listings are subject to change. Some radio broadcasts not available in all areas. Visit www.myafn.net for more information.

College football

AP Top 25 schedule

Thursday, Nov. 4
No. 14 Louisville at Memphis, 6 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 6
No. 1 Southern Cal at Oregon State, 12 p.m.
No. 2 Oklahoma at No. 22 Texas A&M, 12 p.m.
No. 9 Michigan vs. Oregon, 12 p.m.
No. 5 Wisconsin vs. Minnesota, 12 p.m.
No. 18 Iowa vs. No. 19 Oklahoma State, 12 p.m.
No. 7 Utah vs. Colorado State, 12 p.m.
No. 10 Tennessee vs. Notre Dame, 12 p.m.
No. 11 Clemson, 12 p.m.
No. 12 Virginia vs. Maryland, 12 p.m.
No. 13 Florida State vs. Duke, 12 p.m.
No. 15 West Virginia vs. Temple, 12 p.m.
No. 16 Virginia Tech at North Carolina, 12 p.m.
No. 20 Iowa vs. Purdue, 12 p.m.
No. 21 Southern Mississippi vs. Cincinnati, 12 p.m.
No. 23 Arizona State vs. Stanford, 12 p.m.
No. 24 Boston College vs. Rutgers, 12 p.m.

Division I-AA Top 25

PHILADELPHIA The top 25 teams in the Sports Network Division I-AA football poll. The first-place votes are in parentheses. Records through Oct. 31 and previous ranking.

Record	Pts
1. Southern Illinois (7)	21
2. Georgia Southern (8)	21
3. Furman (7)	21
4. Sam Houston State (7)	21
5. Western Kentucky (7)	21
6. Delaware (7)	21
7. Western Michigan (7)	21
8. New Hampshire (7)	21
9. Montana (7)	21
10. Middle Tennessee (7)	21
11. North Carolina State (7)	21
12. Wake Forest (7)	21
13. Virginia Tech (7)	21
14. North Carolina (7)	21
15. Virginia (7)	21
16. North Carolina State (7)	21
17. Wake Forest (7)	21
18. Virginia Tech (7)	21
19. North Carolina (7)	21
20. Virginia (7)	21
21. North Carolina State (7)	21
22. Wake Forest (7)	21
23. Virginia Tech (7)	21
24. North Carolina (7)	21
25. Virginia (7)	21

Others receiving votes: Southern U., 214; Cleveland State, 159; Middle Tennessee, 129; Appalachian State, 108; North Dakota State, 85; Maine, 81; North Carolina, 79; Bethune-Cookman, 10; Nichols State, 10; North Carolina, 10; North Carolina, 10; Tennessee Tech, 10; Texas State, 10.

Division II Top 25

Record	Pts
1. Pittsburg State, Kan. (2)	10
2. Northwest Missouri State (1)	10
3. North Dakota State (1)	10
4. Michigan Tech (1)	10
5. Valparaiso, Ind. (1)	10
6. Arkansas Tech (1)	10
7. North Dakota State (1)	10
8. Colorado State of Mines (1)	10
9. North Dakota State (1)	10
10. Winona State, Minn. (1)	10
11. Northwood, Mich. (1)	10
12. Shippensburg, Pa. (1)	10
13. East Stroudsburg, Pa. (1)	10
14. Carson-Newman, Tenn. (1)	10
15. State College, Ohio (1)	10
16. North Dakota (1)	10
17. North Dakota State (1)	10
18. Tuskegee, Ala. (1)	10
19. North Carolina (1)	10
20. State College, Minn. (1)	10
21. Salisbury, Mass. (1)	10
22. Wingate, N.C. (1)	10
23. Salisbury, Mass. (1)	10
24. Edinboro, Pa. (1)	10
25. Edinboro, Pa. (1)	10

Division III Top 25

Record	Pts
1. Mount Union, Ohio (38)	2
2. Linfield, Ore. (2)	2
3. Linfield, Ore. (2)	2
4. Washington & Jefferson, Pa. (1)	2
5. Salisbury, Mass. (1)	2
6. Wooster, Ohio (1)	2
7. Concordia-Moorhead, Minn. (1)	2
8. Trinity, Texas (1)	2

9. Delaware Valley, Pa.

10. Maryland-Bay, Texas

11. Hampton, Va. (1)

12. Augustana, Ill.

13. Augustana, Ill.

14. St. John Fisher, N.Y.

15. Mount St. Joseph, Ohio

16. Mount St. Joseph, Ohio

17. Wis.-Eau Claire, Wis.

18. St. Norbert, Wis.

19. St. Norbert, Wis.

20. Baldwin-Wallace, Ohio

21. Baldwin-Wallace, Ohio

22. Capital, Ohio

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Bell Challenge

Monday

At Club Advantage Multi-Sports of Quebec

Quebec, 11 a.m.

Purse: \$170,000 (Tier II)

Surface: Hard-wood

Singles

First Round

Tamirane Tanasugarn (5), Thailand, def.

Sandra Kucenic, Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-2.

Lubomir Kucenic, Slovakia, def. Anko

Kucenic, Hungary, 6-2, 6-2.

Laura Gravelle (7), United States, def.

Camille Parrot, France, 6-2, 6-2.

Maria Emilia Salerni, Argentina, def. Jenni

Forstner, United States, 7-5, 7-5.

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Advanta Championships

Monday

At The Pavilion

Villanova, Pa.

Purse: \$585,000 (Tier II)

Surface: Hard-wood

Singles

First Round

Rossana Netta de los Rios, Paraguay, def.

Meilen Tu, United States, 6-4, 6-4.

Vuliana Fedak, Ukraine, def. Teyn Ash, def.

Iveta Benesova, Czech Republic, def. Nicole

Brandi, Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-2.

Amey Frayzer, United States, def. Kriste

Valdesola, Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-2.

Vera Zvonareva (4), Russia, def. Sybil

Bamner, Austria, 6-4, 6-4.

Bamner, Austria, 6-4, 6-4.

Bamner, Austria, 6-4, 6-4.

Bamner, Austria, 6-4, 6-4.

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Bamner, Austria, 6-4, 6-4.

New D-backs manager known for intense style

By BOB BAUM
The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Eight years as a successful minor league manager showed that Wally Backman works well with young players. How he does with seasoned major leaguers will be known soon enough.

Backman was hired Monday as manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks, bringing a reputation for toughness and intensity that dates to his days as a scrappy second baseman for the New York Mets, a team he helped win the World Series in 1986.

Managing partner Ken Kendrick said that the issue of working with older players came up in Backman's job interview.

"He has a commanding presence about him, and a sensitivity about the difference between a veteran and a younger player," Kendrick said.

Still, Backman said there will be no attempt to mellow his managing style.

"I am who I am," he said, "last year, the year before and I'll be the same person next year." That person is one with a history of a hot temper and more than a few run-ins with umpires. He was



Backman

frontation, if it's a player and an umpire, I feel like my player has to stay on the field — because he wouldn't be out there if I didn't want him out there. So I'll do everything that I possibly can to keep my player in the game."

He believes players like to play for him, and foresees no problem working with veterans such as Randy Johnson and Luis Gonzalez.

"I've always thought that I was a players' manager," Backman said. "My attitude is aggressive and hard-nosed and I expect my players to give 100 percent at all times, and I never have any problems."

The 45-year-old Backman takes over a team coming off one of the worst seasons in baseball history. Arizona's 111 losses rank eighth-worst since the game began.

once suspended briefly for bumping an umpire, and ejections were not uncommon.

"I protect my player," Backman said. "As a manager when I expect my players to be any kind of confrontational, if it's a player and an umpire, I feel like my player has to stay on the field — because he wouldn't be out there if I didn't want him out there. So I'll do everything that I possibly can to keep my player in the game."

He believes players like to play for him, and foresees no problem working with veterans such as Randy Johnson and Luis Gonzalez.

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The 45-year-old Backman takes over a team coming off one of the worst seasons in baseball history. Arizona's 111 losses rank eighth-worst since the game began.

The 45-year-old Backman takes over a team coming off one of the worst seasons in baseball history. Arizona's 111 losses rank eighth-worst since the game began.

Low, Varitek among Red Sox joining long list of free agents

By RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Right-hander Derek Lowe and catcher Jason Varitek led a parade of 10 Red Sox who filed for free agency Monday, two days after they were honored in Boston following the team's first World Series title since 1918.

Shortstop Orlando Cabrera and backup catcher Doug Mirelli also filed along with right-handed Curtis Leskanen, Ramiro Mendoza and Scott Williamson; left-hander Mike Myers; first baseman Dave McCarty and second baseman Pokey Reese.

Leskanen filed after Boston declined a \$1.25 million option, electing to pay a \$100,000 buyout.

Thirteen Red Sox have filed for free agency since Boston won the World Series last Wednesday, and three more are eligible, including pitcher Pedro Martinez.

Three players from the NL champion St. Louis Cardinals filed: second baseman Tony Womack, right-hander Matt Morris and left-hander Steve Kline.

The New York Mets declined a \$15 million option on Richard Hidalgo and opted to pay the outfielder a \$2 million buyout.

Hidalgo then filed for free agency along with right-handers Kris Benson and Ricky Bottalico, left-hander John Franco and first baseman Todd Zeile, who plans to retire.

"We are open-minded to speaking to Richard about coming back next year," Mets General Manager Omar Minaya said.

Hidalgo, acquired from Houston on June 17, hit .228 (74-324) with 21 homers and 52 RBIs in 86 games with New York. New York has spoken with the agent for Benson, obtained from Pittsburgh in late July. The Mets have said they would like to re-sign him.

Franco, the 44-year-old team captain, probably won't be asked back.

Tampa Bay declined an \$8 million option on Tino Martinez and will pay him a \$1 million buyout. The Devil Rays, his hometown team, remain interested in

re-signing the 36-year-old first baseman.

The Devil Rays obtained Martinez from the Cardinals in a trade last winter and he hit .263 with 23 homers and 78 RBIs in 138 games this year.

Seattle declined to exercise a \$6 million option on closer Eddie Guardado, giving the injured left-hander until Nov. 10 to decide if he wants to exercise a \$4 million player option or become a free agent. Guardado, 34, was limited to 41 appearances last season because of injuries.

Also Monday, right-hander Kevin Appert asked to be reinstated from the voluntary retired list by the Kansas City Royals and filed for free agency.

Forty-three players filed Monday, including Philadelphia left-hander Eric Milton, Chicago Cubs outfielder Moises Alou, Houston's second baseman Jeff Keaton, Arizona's designated hitter Alex Rodriguez and Anaheim's designated hitter Andres Galarraga.

A total of 170 players have filed for free agency and to be 46 more are potentially eligible to file by the Nov. 11 deadline.

Ex-Reds GM Bowden hired by MLB to run Expos

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Jim Bowden spent his first day on the job acting like someone who planned to stick around.

Bowden was on the phone talking trades with other general managers Tuesday morning, even before the official announcement of

his hiring as the interim GM of the Washington-Bowden Expos.

"I look forward to doing everything I possibly can — as long as I'm in the position — to send the Expos in the right direction," Bowden said.

Bowden will oversee offseason trades and signings for a fran-



Briefs

chise in flux, one that is moving from Montreal and searching for Bowden at the same time. He expects to return to his job as a commentator for ESPN, which has granted him a leave of absence, when the team's sale is completed during the next several months.

"I really enjoy television," said Bowden, who was Cincinnati's general manager from 1992-2003. "I'm taking this position in an interim position. That's what I agreed to, and that's what I feel I'm going to carry out."

Bowden replaces Omar Minaya, who resigned during the final week of the regular season to become general manager of the New York Mets.

Bowden's first task Tuesday was to get an assessment of every player on the roster from Frank Robinson, whom Bowden said will remain as the team's manager during the transition period. Bowden was the youngest general manager in major league history when he took the position with the Reds in 1992 at age 31. He made more than 100 trades during 10½ seasons with the club, acquiring players such as Ken Griffey Jr., Sean Casey, David Wells, Dennis Neagle, Danny Graves and rising star Wily Mo Pena.

Randolph, Jaramillo, Collins at top of Mets' list

NEW YORK — Yankees coach Willie Randolph, Texas coach Rudy Jaramillo and former major league pitcher Terry Collins were invited back Monday for a

second round of interviews by the New York Mets, who hope to hire a new manager this week.

They were asked to meet with Mets' executives on Wednesday at Shea Stadium. Carlos Tosca and Jim Riggleman, the other two candidates who interviewed with new general manager Omar Minaya, were not invited back.

New York did not call the three candidates finalists, meaning it is possible others could join the field.

Leyland wants Phillies job

PHILADELPHIA — Jim Leyland has spent the last five years turning down job offers and insisting he'll never manage again in the major leagues. He's ready to return to the dugout.

Leyland, who led Florida to its first World Series championship in 1997 and guided Pittsburgh to three division titles in the early '90s, interviewed for the Philadelphia Phillies' managerial position on Monday, and also plans to talk to the New York Mets.

"This is a great situation, a good ballclub, a very good foundation in a beautiful, new setting," Leyland said, adding Philadelphia is a "great location" because of its proximity to his home in Pittsburgh.

Leyland was the eighth and final candidate interviewed for Philadelphia's manager's job since Larry Bowa was fired two days before the Phillies finished a disappointing season in second place behind Atlanta.

Former managers Don Baylor, Charlie Manuel, Grady Little, Buddy Bell and Jim Pregoski. Pirates third-base coach Tony Russell and Braves hitting coach Terry Pendleton also interviewed.

Yankees 3B Rodriguez still top SS

By RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alex Rodriguez was the best shortstop in the American League for the sixth straight season, according to baseball's annual rankings.

That's right, shortstop. Even though he moved to third base following his February trade from Texas to the New York Yankees, Rodriguez was counted as a shortstop because he played more games at that position over a two-year period (160) than he did at third base (155).

Rodriguez's appearances at shortstop this year were limited to two innings — Aug. 21 against Boston and Aug. 27 at Cleveland — because he missed shortstop Derek Jeter got hurt. The rules for the rankings, compiled by the Elias Sports Bureau, were established by players and owners in their settlement of the 1981 strike.

Rodriguez had an 87.03 ranking on a scale of 100, followed by Atlanta's Miguel Tejada (.85714) and Jeter (.83766).

If Rodriguez had been listed as a third baseman, he would have been second to Oakland's Eric Chavez (.82857).

Toronto first baseman Carlos Delgado was the top player in the major leagues at 98.333, followed by Boston outfielder Manny Ramirez (.97), Yankees outfielder Gary Sheffield (.9675) and St. Louis first baseman Albert Pujols (.96667).

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Turner thinking big for Huskies' next hire

Washington AD would like to see Gilbertson's successor recharge program

BY TIM KORTE
The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Break out the checkbook, Washington. The athletic director hopes to restore Husky football to its old glory when he hires a new coach, and it's probably not going to come cheap.

Washington AD Todd Turner said Monday that Keith Gilbertson will step down after the season, ending an extremely difficult 15 months as Rick Neuheisel's successor.

It became apparent to me — really early as the first day I took this job — that if we didn't get a long-term commitment, then I was just going to be the interim



Gilbertson

coach," Gilbertson said.

Turner will begin his search immediately. He announced no time frame but hopes to make the hire quickly.

"They're going to need a Ph.D. in coaching," Turner said.

They need to be people of the highest integrity, with a winning character, who understand the mission of the university and the breadth of the job."

Turner, hired in August, and new university president Mark Emmert are distancing Washington from the turmoil that surrounded Neuheisel's dismissal. They intend to make the Huskies a national power again.

The 56-year-old Gilbertson is 7-13 in two seasons after stepping into a difficult situation in the summer of 2003. Neuheisel had just been fired for gambling on NCAA basketball when Gilbertson, the offensive coordinator, was promoted.

"It would have been easy to say no," Gilbertson said. "I had other options, but that would have been the opposite of what we tell our kids to do: Step up and take a shot."

The Huskies went 6-6 in Gilbertson's first season, then fell to 1-7 and 0-5 in the Pac-10 after a 31-6 loss at Oregon last weekend. It's the worst season in 35 years for a school that shared the 1991 national title.

Gilbertson, who also coached Idaho (1986-88) and California (1992-95), is 55-48 overall in nine seasons as a head coach.

Names mentioned as potential candidates include California coach Jeff Tedford, New England Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weiss, Urban Meyer of Utah, Boise State's Dan Hawkins and Missouri's Gary Pinkel.

All are either rising stars or have ties to Washington.



3 a.m. Monday
AFN-Atlantic
Game time is Japan and Korea Standard. Guam is one hour ahead; Singapore and Hong Kong are one hour behind.

Double: Philly brings 6-0 mark into Pittsburgh

DOUBLE, FROM BACK PAGE

"We're just trying to keep our focus, keep our mind on the straight and narrow, and focus on Philadelphia."

With former Eagles running back Duce Staley coming off his fourth 100-yard game, it all adds up to arguably the biggest Eagles-Steelers game since 1947. Back then, the Eagles won 21-0 in Pittsburgh in a special Eastern Conference playoff game staged after the teams tied for the regular-season title.

The only comparable regular-season game since the teams moved into separate conferences in 1970 came in 1979, when the Eagles surprised the Steelers 17-14. The Steelers, who would go on to win the Super Bowl, were 4-0 at the time and the Eagles, who would lose in the Super Bowl a year later, were 3-1.

Receiver Hines Ward doesn't think the Steelers will have a problem matching the intensity they showed against the Patriots when they meet the Eagles.

"We've got a great running game, two dominant wide receivers and a young, confident, cocky quarterback back there playing his heart out," Ward said. "We're a hard team to beat."

Cowher also doesn't think the Steelers will become distracted as they try to return to the playoffs after missing them last season and four of their previous six seasons.

"We'll be fine," he said. "We aren't going to squander what we have created for ourselves. We'll be ready to go, trust me."

Texas takes step toward BCS bowl

BY JIM VERTUNO
The Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Welcome to November, when the Texas Longhorns annually inch toward a berth in the Bowl Championship Series only to see their hopes dashed.

Will this year be any different? The Longhorns already are climbing back into the BCS scene.

Ranked No. 6 in The Associated Press writer's poll, the Longhorns moved from 10th to seventh in the BCS standings after losses by Miami and Florida State.

The trick for Texas is to avoid a loss and hope the system doesn't work against them like it did last year when Kansas State's stunning upset of Oklahoma spoiled the Longhorns' BCS plans.

The Longhorns have three games left on their schedule, starting with Saturday's Big 12 matchup against Oklahoma State (6-2).

Texas players say it's time to think about the Cowboys, not a potential bowl game.

"Coach told us to put it out of our minds," senior linebacker Derrick Johnson said Monday. "You always want to be optimistic, but we still have to win all our games."

It sounds good, but that attitude didn't help Texas last year.

After losing to Oklahoma at midseason, the Longhorns ripped off six straight wins and were ranked No. 6 in the BCS. An Oklahoma win over Kansas State in the Big 12 title game would have sent Texas to the Fiesta Bowl.

Instead, the Wildcats bumped off the Sooners. Kansas State grabbed the conference's automatic BCS berth and sent Texas tumbling back to the Holiday Bowl where the disgraced Longhorns lost to Washington State.

"We were crushed because of some system," said coach Mack Brown, who still preaches his win-first, worry-later attitude to his players.

After Oklahoma State, the Longhorns travel to Kansas before finishing the season at home against Texas A&M. The Longhorns also need other teams in front of them in order to move up the standings and solidify a BCS berth.

Senior safety Phillip Geiggar said the Longhorns felt they were robbed of a BCS berth last season.

"When you think about last year and how we got played by



Texas, with tight end David Thomas (16), has not played in a BCS bowl game. Last year, Oklahoma's loss to Kansas State in the Big 12 championship game bumped the Longhorns to the Holiday Bowl.

the system, we throw it out of our heads," he said. "If we lose next weekend, it's not going to matter."

Texas' BCS disappointments go deeper than last year.

In 2001, the Longhorns won six in a row to end the regular season and won the Big 12 South Division title. A victory over Colorado would have sent the Longhorns to the national title game but the Buffaloes ended those dreams with a 39-7 victory.

BCS Standings

	AP	Pts	USA	ESP	Comp	USA	ESP	Comp	USA	ESP	Comp	Avg	Pct
1. Oklahoma	1	1536	2945	1515	2944	11	96	389	389	389	389	389	389
2. Oklahoma State	2	1526	2945	1515	2944	11	96	389	389	389	389	389	389
3. Auburn	3	1507	3274	3149	3270	9	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
4. California	4	1382	4382	1229	789	9	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
5. Wisconsin	5	1363	4382	1229	789	11	61	510	7579				
6. Utah	6	1312	1469	1002	1229	9	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
7. Texas	7	1262	1769	1002	1229	9	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
8. Tennessee	8	1132	686	11	931	618	8	430	714				
9. Georgia	9	1102	713	1279	200	12	26	200	2019				
10. Miami	10	1065	4215	11	931	618	8	430	714				
11. Michigan	11	1005	4215	11	931	618	8	430	714				
12. Boise State	12	803	491	113	74	287	14	44	440	4738			
13. Florida St.	13	803	491	113	74	287	14	44	440	4738			
14. Virginia Tech	14	803	491	113	74	287	14	44	440	4738			
15. West Virginia	15	784	464	11	784	514	19	32	270	4109			
16. Arizona St.	16	389	1163	23	144	564	8	74	740	3169	15		
17. Oklahoma St.	17	315	3169	15	309	15	309	15	309	15	309	15	
18. Virginia Tech	18	315	3169	15	309	15	309	15	309	15	309	15	

Team percentages are derived by dividing a team's voting points by a maximum 1625 possible points in the AP poll and 152 possible points in the USA Today/ESPN poll. Six computer rankings calculated in inverse points order (25 for No. 1, 24 for No. 2, 23 for No. 3, 22 for No. 4, 21 for No. 5, 20 for No. 6, 19 for No. 7, 18 for No. 8, 17 for No. 9, 16 for No. 10, 15 for No. 11, 14 for No. 12, 13 for No. 13, 12 for No. 14, 11 for No. 15, 10 for No. 16, 9 for No. 17, 8 for No. 18, 7 for No. 19, 6 for No. 20, 5 for No. 21, 4 for No. 22, 3 for No. 23, 2 for No. 24, 1 for No. 25). For each team is dropped, and the remaining four are added and divided by 100 (the maximum possible points) to produce a percentage. The BCS Standings are calculated by averaging the percent totals of the Associated Press, USA Today/ESPN coaches and Computer polls.

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Fast-starting Chargers determined to finish strong

BY BERNIE WILSON
The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — After last season's nightmare, who could have imagined the San Diego Chargers with a winning record, a reinvigorated quarterback and one of the NFL's highest-scoring offenses?

Yes, the Chargers are a surprise at this season's halfway point, and they'll be an even bigger one if they can finish their respectable start by actually making it to the playoffs.

The Chargers improved to 5-3 with a 42-14 rout of the Oakland Raiders on Sunday, highlighted by quarterback Drew Brees' near-perfect performance.

Brees completed 22 of 25 passes — a franchise-record 88 percent — for 281 yards and a career-high five touchdowns.

San Diego certainly looks better than it did at this point a year ago, when it was 1-7 and stumbling toward an NFL-worst 4-12 finish.

But the Chargers are reacting cautiously, and with good reason.

In 2001, LaDainian Tomlinson's first season, the Chargers started 5-2 before losing their last nine games.

The next season, Marty Schottenheimer's first as coach, they were 6-1 before losing seven of their last nine.

Last season, they were simply awful from the start, losing their first five games and missing the playoffs for the eighth straight year.

Asked if Sunday's victory was the biggest since he's been here, Tomlinson took a look-see attitude.

"I think it's still too early to tell," he said, "I'm not ready to say it was a big win yet."

The Chargers are tied for the AFC West lead with Denver. San Diego hosts New Orleans (3-4) Sunday, then has a bye.

"If we get this win we can go into the bye week 6-3," Brees

said. "Then we go right back to Oakland, so we're not done with these guys and I am sure they will have something planned for us when we go up there to their place."

The Chargers have only two teams with winning records — Denver and Indianapolis — remaining on their schedule but also must play two games against division rival Kansas City. The Chiefs have scored 101 points in their last two games. The Broncos beat them 23-13 in Denver on Sept. 26.

"I'm excited about the development of the team, but I also realize 5-3 is only a couple of games

above .500, and .500 doesn't cut it in this league," Schottenheimer said.

Three years ago, some Chargers got pretty full of themselves with their fast start. Most of those players have been weeded out as Schottenheimer tried to reshape the team's character.

"It's amazing how the chemistry of the team just came together, a bunch of different guys rolled into one, trying to get better, and always challenging each other," fullback Lorenzo Neal said Monday. "When you have so much talent, so much competition, guys are fighting to get on the field, guys are dying to make plays."

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Questions are only half answered in NFL

BY DAVE GOLDBERG
The Associated Press

In Week 1, the Philadelphia Eagles toyed with the New York Giants, beating them 31-17 in a game that wasn't that close.

About half a season later, these same bedraggled Giants might be the second-best team in the NFC. At least they're among them, one of only three two-loss teams in the conference behind unbeaten Philadelphia, all seemingly light years behind in ability.

No, don't put the Eagles in the Super Bowl yet, although their path looks to be unimpeded as the 2004 season nears the half-way point. The same can't be said in the AFC, where there are several legitimate contenders after New England's 21-game winning streak ended decisively in Pittsburgh.

Still, after eight weeks in another unpredictable season, it's at least starting to become clear who will challenge for the playoffs and who will miss them.

AFC

That New England lost to Pittsburgh wasn't a surprise: The Patriots haven't played very well recently and a long winning streak builds its own internal pressure until things just go "Pop!" Bill Belichick's team might play better now that it doesn't have to worry about one loss, although it can't afford to lose players like Corey Dillon and Ty Law for too long.

But Pittsburgh (6-1) certainly looks like a major contender, and it's probably time to consider Ben Roethlisberger one of those rare rookie quarterbacks who can play at a consistently high level. The one thing he hasn't had to do yet is bring his team from behind — throw when the opposition knows he's going to throw.

The Patriots could even have a problem in their own division.

The Jets, who also have just one loss after routing the Miami Dolphins 41-14 on Monday night, did everything but beat New England in Foxboro, losing 13-7 but playing the Patriots even. The return game is Dec. 26, the next-to-last week of the regular season.

The most intriguing division is the South, where the third-year Texans have joined the Jaguars as challengers to the Colts. All have three losses, and the state of Indianapolis' defense, which must face Minnesota's offense next Monday night, has to be of concern to Tony Dungy, who won't enjoy watching tapes of the debacle in Kansas City.

Even Tennessee (3-5) could get involved

Analysis

if Steve McNair can regain his health, making it a division that could be won at 9-7 and produce no wild-card entries.

Don't give Pittsburgh the North just yet. The Steelers' one loss is to Baltimore, and the Ravens (4-3) will get Jamal Lewis back from suspension this week. No, Kyle Boller isn't the ideal quarterback, but he played a decent fall-safe game in Philadelphia on Sunday. If the Ravens won a Super Bowl with defense, they can still win the division that way and then ... Who knows?

Don't rule out Kansas City in the West despite a 1-4 start.

The Chiefs scored a total of 101 points in their past two games, both victories, and still have five of their six division games left, including two with San Diego, which is tied with Denver for first place at 5-3. The Broncos have lost badly two straight weeks and no one is quite sure about the Chargers yet, although Drew Brees, with 14 touchdown passes and just three interceptions for the season, seems to be blossoming at quarterback.

Wild cards? One from the East, the other from either the North or West.

NFC

Everyone talks about the New England's



Despite a four-game losing streak, the Packers don't think a playoff spot is out of their grasp, as is this pass to Donald Driver.



Running back Priest Holmes has done his part getting the Chiefs back on track after a 1-4 start, scoring seven touchdowns in two weeks as Kansas City has scored 101 points.

streak, but the Eagles have been almost as good during the same period — 20-3 since starting the 2003 season 0-2. With Terrell Owens and Jevon Kearse added, Philadelphia is 7-0 and clearly better than anyone else in the conference and hungry for the title after getting stopped a game short of the Super Bowl the past three seasons.

Everything else is up in the air. Green Bay started 1-4 with three straight home losses, now has won three straight, and still plays Minnesota twice, giving the Packers reason to believe they can catch the Vikings in the North.

The Vikings tend to start fast and finish slowly, but they also tend to at least split with the Packers: They are 13-11 against Green Bay since Brett Favre arrived in 1992.

Detroit (4-3) also is in the mix in the North, although the Lions may be too young. One young player could be the key: Roy Williams has missed two of the past three games, and Detroit lost the two games he missed and won the one he played.

Atlanta (5-2) leads New Orleans by two games in the South and Tampa Bay by

three games. Credit Jim Mora for getting the Falcons up for a win in Denver on Sunday after losing 56-10 in Kansas City the previous week.

"We had the mind-set that we were going to stay focused and learn from the film and put it behind us," linebacker Keith Brooking said.

Seattle (4-3) and St. Louis (4-3) have the West to themselves and because they figure to beat up on Arizona and San Francisco, one of them could finish as a wild-card entry.

Figure the Giants will get the other wild card.

They're not going to catch the Eagles in the East: Philadelphia is 14-2 at worst. New York probably will wind up 11-5 or 10-6. But the Giants are the perfect reason why no one can look at a schedule and mark "W's" and "L's" on it: They were favored by a touchdown at home against Detroit and lost; they were underdogs by a touchdown at Minnesota and won.

Yes, things can change, but ...

Barring major injuries, pencil in the Eagles and ...

Who knows?

NFL Hall of Fame Challenge

Top Scores for Week 8

194	greekgod	Stavanger, Norway
186	Swab & Tols	Marshall Center
180	kingdaniel93	V Corp
178	Imagint88	fob danger
176	desaers60	DCS
176	sfc70	80th ASG NSA
176	Cheesehead	Andersen AFB, Guam
174	Phmedics	18 amds
174	CRUSH	Dodds
174	Joeyg188	Ramstein Air Base

STARS AND STRIPES

OCONUS.com

Best Overall Scores

1324	giants#1	hnc 2/27 ar
1286	STEELFROGWOOD	MAG-12
1274	Jaguar One	DoDDs
1272	packers97	FISC
1268	Chickybroww	726 AMS
1268	Mercury1	Misawa AB
1256	dogboy	374 AMXS
1252	Allisond	18 CES
1250	habusaki	friedburg
1250	Jack58	422 ABS RAF Croughton

See websites for official game rules.

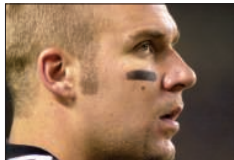
Check this space every Thursday during the entire NFL season for the weeks Top Scores and Best Overall Scores during the NFL Challenge.

SPORTS



With the Huskies 1-7, Washington announces that coach Gilbertson will resign at end of year, Page 36

Double take in Pittsburgh



Steelers rookie quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, 5-0 as Pittsburgh's starter, ranks fourth in the NFL in passer rating (104.7) and second in completion percentage (70.1).



Former Eagles running back Duce Staley, who ran for 125 yards in Pittsburgh's 34-20 victory over New England on Sunday, has four 100-yard games in his first season with the Steelers.

After conquest of Pats, Steelers get ready to host unbeaten Eagles

BY ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — He wasn't yet born the last time the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Super Bowl. That isn't preventing rookie quarterback Ben Roethlisberger from bringing back the memories of the greatest times — and the greatest teams — in franchise history.

The Steelers are 6-1 after ending New England's 21-game winning streak with a dominating 34-20 victory Sunday in which Roethlisberger improved to 5-0 as a starter. In a fitting throwback to the days when the Steelers won four Super Bowls in six seasons, Roethlisberger is off to the best start by an NFL rookie quarterback since Pittsburgh's Mike Kruczek was 6-0 in 1976.

"We have a rookie quarterback who is playing tremendous," linebacker Joey Porter said.

The Steelers need him to keep playing that well Sunday against the Philadelphia Eagles (7-0) as they try to accomplish something no NFL team has done so late in a season: beat undefeated teams in successive weeks.

Just playing unbeaten teams in consecutive games past the early weeks of a season is a rare occurrence; it hasn't happened since the Detroit Lions lost twice to the undefeated Chicago Bears to close the 1934 season. It also occurred in 1921, when Dayton played Akron (7-0-1) and Buffalo (7-0-2), and in 1920, when Canton met Buffalo (7-0) and Akron (6-0-1).

"Everybody's antennas across the country are starting to go up a little bit," wide receiver Plaxico Burress said, referring to the Steelers' new-found notoriety.

That's largely because of a 22-year-old quarterback who plays like he's much older. Because of Roethlisberger, the Steelers, 6-10 season ago, are hearing about all this ancient history.



First-place Jets run all over hapless Dolphins in prime time

Page 39



Other than the Eagles, the NFL playoff picture is guesswork halfway through the season

Page 38



Yokota's dominance in the Rising Sun Bowl triggers debate on Okinawa's split squads

Page 32

Suns' Tabuse is first Japanese-born NBA player

Page 34

